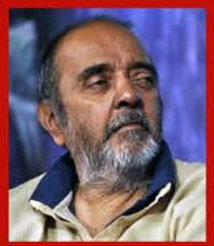

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He is now writing for a leading Hindi film magazine *Mayapuri* and at 71, he writes at least two articles every day. He hopes to write till he can no longer write.

My Dev

Memories of an Immortal Man

ALI PETER JOHN

MY DEV

Memories of an Immortal Man

Ali Peter John

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DEDICATION

To Khwaja Ahmed Abbas

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again and till my life lasts, this book would also not have been possible without my mother whose blessings have led me all through my life and continues to do.

People ask me why I am so grateful to my Guru K. A. Abbas and I say, what is the use of being anything if you don't show your gratitude to the man who helped you cross the road.

And I will be failing as a human being if I don't thank all those who have helped me to live in a world where I am a misfit and see no hope of changing.

And I must thank my young discovery, Aarti Mishra who has come into my life like a light of hope and has helped me in giving the finishing touches to this book, which I consider my most emotional outpouring of powerful feelings for a man who may have gone away for the world, but who lives for me every time I feel awake, alert, agile and alive.

I will be failing if I don't mention the name of Hemaa Singh who introduced me to Mr. Surjit Singh because of whom one more of my favourite dreams is all set to come true, and Mr. Shankar Iyer who did all the leg work.

Ali Peter John
Mumbai
September 2021

CONTENTS

PREFACE 8

WHY THIS BOOK ON DEV? 8

INTRODUCTION 10

THANK YOU, DEV, FOR GIVING ME DEV 10

USS RAAT KO JAB DEV AUR SURAIYA AAKHRI BAAR MILE THE, UNKE DIL PAR KYA GUZRI HOGI ?. 12

DEV AUR SURAIYA KI MOHABBAT KI AJEEB DAASTAN 14

ANAND KO JAB ANAND SE MILKAR BAHUT KHUSHI HO RAHI THI. . . . . AUR PHIR ? 17

THERE WAS, THERE IS AND THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE DEV 20

WHEN DEV ANAND TRAVELLED BACK IN TIME FOR HIS FIRST FILM 23

DEV ANAND'S PENTHOUSE MAY HAVE VANISHED, BUT IT WILL LIVE IN MY HEART 27

MUJRIM SHRI DEV ANAND, HAAZIR HO!!! 32

DEV SAHAB APNE CHAAHNE WAALO KO UTNA HI CHAAHTE THE 34

DEV JAISAA "BOSS" AUR KAHAN ? 37

THE LITTLE OUTSIDER WHO FOUND A PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF SOME VERY GREAT INSIDERS 39

DEV SAHAB LIKED GIVING CREDIT WHERE DESERVED. . . 41

HE WAS AN ADMIRER OF AMITABH BACHCHAN 41

DEV ANAND SWEPT ME OFF MY FEET WHEN I WAS SEVENTEEN 44

THE DAY DEV SAHAB CRIED WHEN SURAIYA DIED. . . . 46

THE FIRST WOMAN IN DEV ANAND'S LIFE 48

DEV SAHAB ADMIRED RISHI KAPOOR WHOM HE CALLED MY "SON" 50

WHEN DEV ANAND'S ADVICE CHANGED THE CAREER OF SADHANA 52

DEV HAD PLANS TO MAKE THREE MORE FILMS BUT… 54

WHEN DEV ANAND PLUNGED INTO POLITICS 56

I KNOW THAT HE IS DEAD BUT WHO WILL MAKE MY HEART UNDERSTAND ? 58

USHA KE PYAARE DEV BHAI SAHAB 60

A DAY WITH DEV IN CHENNAI 63

"DUM MAARO DUM" WAS ALMOST NOT GOING TO BE A PART OF DEV ANAND'S "HARE RAMA HARE KRISHNA" 67

AN APPLE A DAY -WAS IT THE SECRET BEHIND DEV ANAND'S YOUTH ? 68

THE STORIES BEHIND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY 71

DEV BELIEVED DEATH COULD BE MUCH MORE EXCITING THAN LIFE. 73

THE FREE, FRANK AND FEARLESS DEV 74

DID DEV WORK MIRACLES ? 77

WE YOUNGSTERS SHOULD DO SOMETHING TOGETHER, RISHI 79

AN END WHICH CANNOT BE AN END 81

JAANA NA DIL SE DOOR, DEV SAHAB 82

(UNKE NINETY EIGHTH JANAM DIN KE AVSAR PAR) 82

NAME INDEX 90

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 93

OTHER BOOKS BY THE PUBLISHER 94

PREFACE

WHY THIS BOOK ON DEV?

Who else can I dedicate this book to, but the man whose life and work has been inspiring me for the last 40 years, the one man who can never be again, Dev Anand ?

I have known and have been dealing with legends and stars, but I must confess with all my heart that if there is one man who has touched my heart and to a large extent changed it, it is this man who never asked me to call him Mr. Dev Anand, Dev sahab or Sir, but who was most comfortable when I just called him Dev.

I have been watching his films ever since I was in school and college like my entire generation, anyone who said their lives were not impacted by the sheer magic of the man, he or she will be lying. I too was totally bowled over when I saw him in films, but when I saw and met him in person, believe me, he gave me the feeling that he was either the ambassador of God on Earth or God himself in Corduroy Jeans.

And as I grew up, I realized he was not like all the other stars I knew, he was more than a star and a man out of this world, who couldn't be real, but with time, I realised that he was the most down to earth man who once told me, "Ali, if I had signed all the films, I could have bought Bombay" and yet resisted all the attractions and temptations to keep signing films and keep making money. And the Dev who could have invested all the money he had made in films in any other business like most of his contemporaries, could have been the richest and the tallest icons, but Cinema was his passion and he lived and died for it.

Dev was a collection of all the best colours of life. He was an ideal son, brother, father, filmmaker, writer, director and editor besides being many other men in one man. There were attempts made to know him and understand him when he was alive, there are attempts still being made to know him, but knowing him as I did, I don't think it will be easy for anyone to understand the real Dev.

This book, therefore is not my attempt to show my knowledge about him and his many achievements. This book is only my earnest attempt to paint a portrait of the Dev I knew and who gave me all the privileged experiences to know him as closely as possible.

This book is a privileged look into the life of a man who was born immortal. I believe that Dev was and is immortal, but what is wrong if I cannot forget any of his memories, which for me are more precious than the prayers I pray to all the other Devs I know and I have met and I don't have any interest of knowing any other Dev.

ALI PETER JOHN

INTRODUCTION

THANK YOU, DEV, FOR GIVING ME DEV

I must have met him thousand of times in the years that I knew him. I must have met him in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening, in the night, at his birthdays, at the different times when he shot some of his most significant films, but I don't remember a single time when I wished him a good morning or any other wish. I didn't have to, because every time I saw him, I could only exclaim, “Oh God" because he gave me a feeling that no other star or any of the greatest religious or political leaders of my time gave me. There was something about him that could not let me take my eyes off him and I don't mind if people call me names if I say that I was all smiles and all happiness every time I saw him, the kind of happiness that no almighty and invisible God could give me. I had been a very firm believer in a God about whom my mother had taught me more than any of the religious books, preachers and dogmas, but ever since I saw him had The Ball Room of the Taj Mahal Hotel at the premiere of his film, 'Des Pardes', all that I knew about God had to make way and I had nothing to do with him, but it was my heart together with my mind that kept telling me that if there was a God (Dev), God would have looked, talked, thought, smiled and even walked like him, the man who was called Dev and was so much more than Dev and who could and should have been the face of God more than all the thousands and crores of Gods we have and who are made use of by small men for their own practical and nefarious purposes. Do you think that I was and still am a crazy bhakt of the man who I call 'my Dev'? No, I am not crazy, because my dedication to my Dev is more than divine.

I always consider that moment a few minutes before midnight when I heard a voice calling out, "Ali, you are not going, come back to me". I had met the man behind the voice a few hours ago when his lavish party had begun and hundreds of guests from all walks of life had wished him and I was sure that he would have forgotten me and my face after so many hours and so many people, big people meeting him, but it was his voice, the

voice of the one and only Dev Anand. The next morning I was at his Khira Nagar office which had a rickety wooden staircase and he ran on those stairs, while I kept gaping at him in sheer disbelief. He looked back and saw me standing at the foot of the staircase and came running back to hold my hand and take me up to his office which looked like a huge and long compartment of a luxurious train and he had his posh office at one end of the office. It was one of the most easy and comfortable conversations with a man who I once only saw as a dream. He walked me down the staircase and as he kept waving out to me I kept wondering whether all the stars who I was still to meet were as good and full of life as this man called Dev Anand. Forty two years later, I am still waiting to see if my wish can come true. And now I have given up and my only conclusion after spending fifty two years in this good, bad, sad, mad world of films, my only conclusion is that there can never be another Dev.

I have had the privilege of spending some of the most blessed moments of my life with Dev and if I put all that I experienced with him, shared with him and talked about to him, I would have to write a doctorate (thesis) about every meeting, because every meeting was enlightening, exciting, entertaining and electrifying. Nothing that he did, said, thought, felt or expressed was far, far away from the rough and tumble of life and to this day, I keep looking for someone who can dare to take his place in my life, but I have still to find another very simple and yet such a great man.

This is not a biography of the man who was a miracle (have you heard of miracles writing biographies?). This is just a collection of some amazing (I am not using this word as it is a so very commonly used word for anything and anyone, I mean what I see). Amazing Dev who is still more important than any Dev for me.

All those who have not had the privilege of knowing Dev, will know at least a little about him. And all those who had not been fortunate enough to know the many faces of the one face called Dev by the world that came in touch with him will have to console themselves and tell themselves that they could find the whole world and even god but you could never find an extraordinary, unusual and enlightened man like Dev Anand, the kind of man who comes alive only once in a millennium or more.

USS RAAT KO JAB DEV AUR SURAIYA AAKHRI BAAR MILE THE, UNKE DIL PAR KYA GUZRI HOGI ?. . . . . .

It is still not known who fell in love first, Dev or Suraiya, but what is positively known is that they were in love for almost a decade and like all genuine lovers, could not live without each other. Suraiya was a superstar who had lakhs of fans in pre - partition days and Dev was still trying to find a place for himself. Suraiya was the highest paid actress who was also a star - singer. But Suraiya didn't think of her image or her status when she gave her heart to Dev and Dev responded to her love with love.

They teamed up in seven films, but all these films did not fare well, but their love for each other only kept growing. Nothing mattered to them except love. Their love story was compared to the love stories of the greatest lovers of all time and to the love stories of Raj Kapoor and Nargis, Dilip Kumar and Madhubala and even Dilip Kumar and Kamini Kaushal.

But, like all great love stories, this story also had to face thorns in its way.

Suraiya had a mother who took a liking for Dev and had no objections to her daughter marrying Dev and the love story took a tricky and even threatening turn when Suraiya's grandmother came into the picture and was against Dev and Suraiya even meeting each other. The lovers however had well-wishers like actresses Durga Khote and Kamini Kaushal and of course Suraiya's mother.

One evening, Suraiya's mother asked Dev to come to the terrace of Krishna Mahal, the building on Marine Drive where Suraiya lived with her mother and grandmother till the very end. Suraiya's mother wanted the lovers to sort out their problems before they could think of getting married. The lovers met and had a conversation which was more of crime than exchanging any talk. In fact, Dev was so worried about his meeting with Suraiya that he even took a police man friend with him because he expected Suraiya's grandmother to create problems.

The meeting however ended as a meeting of two great lovers and Dev didn't need the protection of the police. It is not known what the lovers talked about, but it is known that they cried till the end of the meeting. That was the last time the lovers met under "peaceful circumstances."

The grandmother however didn't stop creating hassles for the lovers. She began accompanying her "baby" whenever she was shooting with Dev and "supervised" the romantic scenes for the film being shot with Dev and her "baby".

The grandmother's grouse was that Dev was a Hindu and her "baby " was a Muslim. When her anger against Dev grew worst, she flung the diamond ring presented by Dev (which cost 3000 rupees those days) to Suraiya into the sea opposite Krishna Mahal. She also found all the letters Dev had written to Suraiya and burnt them. That was materialistically the end of the love story. Or that is what "the enemy of love", Suraiya's grandmother must have felt. But she was ignorant of the power of true love. . . . . .

A hurt and broken Dev went to the Mehboob Studio the next day to shoot for "Taxi Driver", called an Arya Samaj priest and got married to Kalpana Kartik (whose 90th birthday it is as I write), the heroine of "Taxi Driver" and the beautiful and always bejeweled Suraiya remained a spinster for the next forty years and till the end of her life.

Dev could never forget Suraiya and whenever he remembered her, he cried and those tears he shed for Suraiya were his gifts and his tribute to the " only woman I loved in my life "

They never met again. . . . . He loved and respected Suraiya in life and in death.

DEV AUR SURAIYA KI MOHABBAT KI AJEEB DAASTAN

MOHABBHAT KOI DHARAM SE BHI MAHAN HAI. MOHABBHAT HOTI HAI TOH DIL DHADAKTA HAI. DHARAM SE DIL DARRTA HAI YA ZAMAANA DARRATAA HAI. LEKIN SACCHI MOHABBHAT TAQAYAAMAT REHTI HAI. YE BAAT AGAR SACCH NAHI HAI, TOH SACCHAYI BHI SACCH NAHI

MOHABBAT MARR NAHI SAKTI, MOHABBAT HAMESHA ZINDA REHTI HAI

I could never imagine that I would be sitting with Dev Anand one night and listening to him talk about his much- talked about affair with Suraiya, the well-known singer and actress of the forties and fifties. He was in a mood to go into a flashback and did not hesitate or stop and as his love story grew more and more interesting and intense, I could see the tears of a lover who had not forgotten his beloved even after half a century had passed.

He told me about the early days of his struggle to make it as an actor and how he had many women willing to fall in love with him and make him a part of their lives. But, he said the only time he had fallen in love was when he loved Suraiya for more than eight years.

He was still a struggler when he happened to meet her in a studio and it was almost like love at first sight for him, but she was not only a superstar but also older than him. But once he had fallen for her, it was no stopping him. He often walked past her Marine Drive apartment just to have one glimpse of her. He knew that he was a nobody when compared to her star-status, but he also knew that his love for her was true and it was this feeling that made him a greater lover who believed that his love could never let him down.

Suraiya soon realized how very deeply the young Dev was in love with her and she who had many other bigger admirers and lovers reciprocated

the love of a true lover and soon Dev and Suraiya were the most talked about lovers in the film industry. It was while they were in love that a lane in Lonavala was named after Suraiya and if there was one man who was genuinely happy for her, it was her ardent lover, Dev Anand.

Their love for each other also led to their being teamed as lovers and within a matter of time, they had worked together in a record number of seven romantic films and were the most popular pair loved by one and all because of their love for one another.

Like all great love stories, Dev and Suraiya also had to face all kinds of problems, the most important being the strong opposition of Suraiya's grandmother who could not think of having a Hindu boy falling in love with her "Baby" and opposed their relationship in as vehement a way as possible. She in her old age even visited the studios where the lovers were shooting to see how close they were getting in the romantic scenes shot between them. She stopped the shootings of films when she even saw Dev kissing her "Baby's" eyelashes.

The grandmother kept making life for the lovers a hell on earth but they continued meeting in different places, helped by their common friends and even by Suraiya's mother who supported the lovers but couldn't go against the wishes of the grandmother.

The love story continued for five years during which time they had grown very close and had even exchanged rings even though Dev could not really afford it. The grandmother's tyranny however continued till she succeeded in breaking up their affair. The night Dev realized that it was all over between them, he sat on the parapet alone Marine Drive and cried through the night. It is said that the grandmother took the ring Dev had presented to Suraiya and thrown it in the ocean outside their house. The next afternoon Dev Anand proposed to his heroine Kalpana Kartik, she instantly accepted and a "pandit" was called on the sets where they were shooting and Dev and Kalpana (Mona) were declared husband and wife. Dev got more busy with work, he signed several films to keep himself busy and even gave breaks to several other directors to make films under his banner, Navketan. Dev and Kalpana had two children, a son who they

named Suneil and a daughter named Devina. Dev was however not able to forget his first love and could not have a very happy married life with Kalpana and at one stage, Dev lived at the Sun-N-Sand Hotel in suite number 339 where he lived for more than 20 years.

On the other hand, Suraiya who was at the peak of her career both as a singer and an actress lost interest in work and the last film she did was "Rustom Sohrab". She had it seemed taken a decision that if she could not marry Dev, she would not marry anyone else. She then became a recluse and spent most of her time in her posh apartment and made very rare appearances but whenever she did, she made sure that people knew that she was Suraiya, the great star and she stood out in any kind of crowd because of her expensive sarees and the gold ornaments that she wore. The last public appearance she made was at my paper, "Screen's" awards function at which she was to be presented with the Life time Achievement Award. Dev who attended every awards function organized by "Screen" skipped the function this one time for reasons he did not want to divulge, but which were so very obvious….

Three years later, Suraiya died of a massive heart attack and Dev knew that the media would not leave him in peace. He rushed to his office, "Anand" at Pali Hill early in the morning and arranged for a tent to be set up on the terrace of his office with a telephone line with an unknown number attached. I still don't know why, but he called me and when I reached "Anand", I was led to the tent where we spent several hours talking about Suraiya. The entire media was trying its best to trace him, but he was not available. I remember that one sentence which he spoke during the time we spent together, he had said, "what happened between her and me was a matter between two souls in love, I will never make it a public issue by talking about her in the media". That afternoon he had tears in his eyes several times. His love for Suraiya was still alive.

Dev and Suraiya will always be the symbols of true love which lasts forever and of which great love legends are made of.

ANAND KO JAB ANAND SE MILKAR BAHUT KHUSHI HO RAHI THI. . . . . AUR PHIR ?

There are some films whose history and fate really baffles me. And one of them is " Hum Dono", a film produced by Dev Anand under his banner of Navketan Films and if directed by the genius of Vijay Anand (the credit for direction is originally given to Amar jeet who was the brilliant publicity designer of Navketan Films) and the film has Dev Anand in a double role with Nanda and Sadhana as the two leading ladies.

The film based on the second world war is about the insecurities of love, the ugly and sensitive colours of war and human relationships and how they are threatened in the face of war. The film was the brilliant handiwork of Vijay Anand who once again proved how brilliant he is as a director and especially as a screenplay and dialogue writer. And another highlight of the film are the absolutely brilliant lyrics of Sahir Ludhianvi and matching music by Jaidev, with some of the best songs sung by Mohammad Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosle. The film was a hit and was released in its colourized version on the occasion of its 50th year in 2011.

The songs are memorable and are fresh even after 60 years. Can any one who claims to have any knowledge of Hindi film music ever forget gems of songs like

"Abhi na jao chhodke "

"Main zindagi ka saath nibhaata chala gaya, har fiqr ko dhuven mein udaata chala gaya " (a song which became Dev Anand 's motto in life),

"Allah tero naam ",

"Prabhu tera naam"

"Kabhi khud pe kabhi halaat pe rona aaya" and,

"Jaaha mein aisa kaun hai".

Every song is a promise to be remembered forever.

I had seen the film when I was twelve years old, when I was eighteen years old, when I was twenty - five , thirty and sixty years old and every time it has enchanted me like when I had seen it first and the scenes and dialogue only grows more meaningful and intense. . . . .

And if there is one entire sequence which blows my mind, it is the scene in the mess of the Army when Major Verma (Dev Anand) and Captain Anand (again Dev Anand) meet for the first time. I feel this scene is one of the most interesting, intense, entertaining, philosophical and realistic scenes shot in a bar, so what if it is a bar (mess) in the battle field.

The scene opens with Captain Anand entering the bar and telling the bar keeper (Rashid Khan playing John) that he is looking for Major Verma. When Captain Anand calls Rashid Khan a " Badtameez insaan ", it sounds like he is decorating the bar keeper with a medal.

Major Verma who has a walrus moustache is bewildered when he sees Captain Anand face to face and finds a complete resemblance to him, except for his hair style and his moustache. Major Verma extends a hand of friendship and asks Captain Anand to have a drink with him. Captain Anand says he doesn't drink and Major Verma almost orders him to sit and have at least half a peg and Captain Anand agrees even though he is reluctant initially.

Major Verma tells Captain Anand who is emotional about his beloved, Mita (Sadhana) not remembering him and Major Verma in his flamboyant way tells Captain Anand, " agar woh tumse pyaar karti hai, toh woh tumko zaroor yaad karegi, nahi toh usko bhool jao, forget her" and Captain Anand looks very distraught . And Major Verma goes on a philosophical talk about the life of a soldier and says, " Woh kaunsi taaqat hai jo humko apne maa baap, biwi, premika aur maa (he pauses after the word "maa" and turns his face away from Captain Anand to probably hide his tears) and he continues saying, " na nafrat acchi hai, na jung, na himsa, lekin hum phir bhi kandhon par bandook utaate hai, aur phir ye nahi dekhte ki

kisi ki biwi ka dil toote, kisi premika ka dil toote, na maa ka dil toote (and again when he comes to the word "maa ", he chokes, this emotion is perhaps taken from the real life of Dev Anand who has always been very sensitive and highly emotional when it comes to his mother or any other mother). Major Verma talks about insaanyat and haiwaanyat and barbariyat ko bhadkana and by the time he finishes talking about the impact of war on human relations, he sees Captain Anand sitting with his head down and singing, " kabhi khud par kabhi halaat par rona aaya "(one of the best songs written by Sahir) and after the end of the song Major Verma and Captain Anand walk out hand in hand. The scene ends only to begin the most dramatic and emotional scenes of the film which is laced with high drama, emotional moments, prayers, suspicion and even an attempt to murder, but it all ends with a very pleasant surprise.

I think this film has Dev Anand at his best. He was even nominated for the Filmfare best actor award. He always considered " Hum Dono" to be one of the better films made by Navketan but didn't get the appreciation or the awards that it generally deserved, but he carried on in the same spirit nevertheless.

DEV SAHAB NE JO BHI FILMEIN BANAAYI UNME JAAN THI. UNHONE JEEVAN KI SACHAAYON KO APNE TARIKHE SE PESH KIYA, BINA YE SOCCHE KI UNKI FILMEIN LOGO KO PASAND AAYE YA NA AAYE. FILM BANAANE MEIN BHI UNKA USOOL WAHI THA. . . . . MAIN ZINDAGI KA SAATH NIBHAATA CHALA GAYA AUR HAR FIQR KO DHUVEN MEIN UDAATA CHALA GAYA

THERE WAS, THERE IS AND THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE DEV

The more I think, feel and write about Dev Anand, the more I think and feel and know I don't know the real Dev Anand who rarely gave me any opportunity to know him as the man behind the glorious image that he was.

There has not been a day, an evening or a night and at times even a dream that has gone by during the last thirty years without me, my thoughts being flooded with millions of memories about the time I spent with Dev Saahab and the thoughts and ideas we exchanged. But, when it is about time to celebrate his birthday, my heart and mind go berserk living all those grand moments with a man who was very much a man of the world, but still so very close to all that was saintly and godly which is something, I cannot say about any man I have met during the last seventy years of my life.

What was that something very unusual and almost divine about him that attracted me and still attracts me and sometimes makes me wonder whether the Dev above is greater or the Dev Anand I knew and will always know as the most lovable admirable and caring human being I have met, read about or heard about was better.

Dev Saahab was an extraordinary, enlightened and yet a very ordinary and down- to- earth man. On this birthday of Dev eternal Anand as the title of his biography written by my friend Dr Trinetra Bajpai and his daughter Anshula have written, I wish to bring to light the very human side of a man who was more than any superman or even any god, at least for me. .

Dev Saahab had never taken a holiday or a vacation. It was only work, work and more work for him. He worked and found ways to work even during the worst floods and storms and tsunamis, he worked during the worst bandhs, strikes and terrorist attacks. It will be doing wrong to him to say that work was his worship. He once told me that he had worked on five

films in a year which was a record in those days and had also said, ' Ali, if I would have done all the film that came to me I would not be doing justice to my work, but I could buy half of Bombay. '

A normal day for him began at 5. 30 am after which he had his first and only cup of tea for the day. He had a brisk walk in the green garden outside his bungalow at Iris Park. He came back and gleaned through all the newspapers, had a shower, had a very hearty breakfast and then got ready, got into his car and left for office. He did not even have a glass of water all day and if he felt hungry, he would just bite into an apple or have some dry "chanas" which were always there in a jar which was kept in a very prominent place in his stylishly done up office in his penthouse. He once was with me at the Coromandel Taj hotel in Chennai and expressed his desire to taste a 'masala dosa' and before he could have a bite he was surrounded by a large crowd who had heard stories about how he was very particular about his food habits and his having a masala dosa had made news in the next day's newspapers. He may have smoked in his films, but he never smoked in real life. He didn't drink except on some special occasions when he had a small peg of whisky and held the glass till the party was over and sometimes poured his drink into the nearest flower pot. I don't want to boast about this achievement, but I once made him drink four pegs at one of the parties hosted by my company.

On a normal day he never reached home before 11pm had another shower after which he had his first full meal of the day which was mostly Indian food like two phulkas, some rice, dal and vegetables, he rarely had heavy non – veg dishes on his plate. He went through all the papers again to catch up with what he had missed in the morning. He never went to bed before watching the news on BBC.

He was very faithful to his staff whether it was the security guards, his domestic helps, his drivers(he was perhaps the only boss who had only two drivers during his entire career). He never sacked anyone and always paid them at the right time, even if his company was not doing well financially. He also looked after all the medical needs of his staff. He often showed me how human he was when he first dropped his driver Prem first in his slum in Santacruz, then dropped me home and went back driving himself.

In all my years with him, I never once heard him speaking against his contemporaries competitors or even utter a word like idiot, he never spoke ill against women and even when he was writing his autobiography, he told me he would not write anything that would give the women or their families any reason to complain or cry foul.

And the best thing about him was his weakness for some of the best clothes and shoes which he got mostly from London where he had his shopping haunts. He was once banned from wearing black because whenever he wore black there was a frenzy among women. He had a fetish for colourful caps and scarves, a large number of which were kept in a special room at the mehboob studio which was gifted to him by Akhtar the wife of Mehboob Khan. Even when he went up to President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam to receive Dada Saheb Phalke award, he was wearing his trademark corduroy jeans, a stylish shirt, a scarf and a cap and the entire house came down with applause and even President Kalam broke protocol and stood and clapped for him for fifteen minutes.

Dev Saahab believed in his moving with the times, but he couldn't change his style or his way of life. He wrote all his scripts with a fountain pen and wrote his entire autobiography in long hand and with a felt pen.

If there was one thing Dev Saahab had a dislike for, it was falling sick and lying in hospital. The only funerals he attended were those of his brothers, Chetan Anand and Vijay Anand besides Ashok Kumar who had given him his first big break in 'Ziddi', Raj Kapoor and Nutan with whom he had done several films. He would arrange for the funerals of his staff and even cry for them but would avoid going to their funerals.

HE ONCE ASKED ME WHY PEOPLE WERE SO SCARED OF DYING AND WHY THEY COULDN'T THINK THAT DEATH WAS ONLY AN ENTRANCE TO ANOTHER WORLD WHICH COULD BE FAR BETTER THAN THIS WORLD. I HOPE AND PRAY THAT DEV SAAHAB HAS FOUND THAT BEAUTIFUL WORLD AND IS SPREADING HIS LOVE AND JOY THERE AND GIVING THAT WORLD THE PLEASURE OF BEING A PRECIOUS AND UNDYING SPIRIT WHICH HE WAS HERE AND WILL CERTAINLY BE A PART OF WHEREVER HE IS. .

WHEN DEV ANAND TRAVELLED BACK IN TIME FOR HIS FIRST FILM

No, I am sorry no one can accuse me or charge me with any act or any kind of law for writing about Dev Anand, not even the Dev (God) above… Now, tell me how can I keep away from writing about this unusual and unbelievable story about Dev who I called Dev Saahab till the very end, even though I knew that he loved even the youngest man or woman from any field of life to just call him Dev?

Dev had completed sixty years as a leading man in Hindi films. He had made his debut in Prabhat's "Hum Ek Hain" directed by P. L Santoshi (the father of Rajkumar Santoshi) for producer Baburao Pai who was one of the partners of the prestigious Prabhat Film Company. Kamala Kotnis was the heroine. The year was 1946 and he was destined to create the kind of history that can never be forgotten. I was sitting with him in his pent house; he had called me because he said he wanted to discuss something very important with me. I who was used to his springing surprises couldn't even guess what he was up to this time. . .

He kept running up and down in his own office and kept saying, "I have a great idea, Ali. I don't know if you know that I have completed sixty years in films and I want to celebrate it in a way that no one must have thought of". I kept sitting and waiting for his next statement and he asked me, "I am telling you about my plan and please listen to it till the end and then tell me whether you like my idea or not".

He came up with something I had least expected. . .

He said that he wanted to take the same Deccan Queen to Poona which he had sixty years ago when he was invited to Poona by Baburao Pai to play the hero in Hum Ek Hain and before I could react to his idea, he told me that he had already spoken to the railway authorities about booking a few compartments on the same Deccan Queen he had taken once and was taking a team of journalists with him and he wanted me to go with him. How could I say no to the man who I had always treated more than my

own father, who unfortunately did not give me the chance to know the feeling of what it meant to have a father because he had died when I was only seven and kept pining for a father-like figure who I found in Dev Saahab.

The morning to take the Deccan Queen dawned and Dev Saahab as usual was the first to reach the station and sounded as excited as a school boy on his first picnic. I felt embarrassed to reach after him, but there were many others who came more than an hour late and it was only the charm of Dev Sahab that made the railway authorities delay the departure. Once we were all on the train in one compartment, Dev Sahab showed how good a host he could be. From the time we left Mumbai, the train became special as more and more people came to know that Dev Anand was on the train. The train which normally did not stop at all stations had to stop at almost every station as there were hundreds of people who had somehow come to know about Dev Sahab travelling to Poona.

Dev Sahab was in his elements and did not look tired; neither did he let his excitement die down. He was Dev Anand all the way and even the most senior journalists sang songs from the films of Dev Sahab and even danced with the women joining them. Needless to say, there was a continuous flow of refreshments, cold drinks, coffee and tea, but Dev was Dev and he did not even have a sip of water till we reached Poona station.

Dev Sahab and all of us were surprised to see a massive crowd outside the station and he was caught in the midst of the crowd which never let him go till he had to literally plead with them and say, “Aaj main poora din tum logo ke shehar mein hoon, aao, milo aur bahut saari baatein karte hain". He was covered with garlands and presented with countless bouquets which he threw back at the crowd with love as he kept waiving out to them. I had been with him to several places in India and had seen cities coming to a halt when the news about his being in the city spread including the capital city of Delhi.

Dev Sahab took us to the FTII which had come in the place where Prabhat's Studios was and showed us the exact places where he shot for Hum Ek Hain. He grew emotional when he showed us the place where he

had met Guru Dutt, who was an assistant dance director of the film and where he had seen some extraordinary talent in him and had promised him to give him his first break as a director when he had made it big in Bombay, a promise he kept and gave Indian cinema one of its greatest directors. . .

For me, the most exciting time was when he privately took me to the foot of a hill which he kept running up as the hill was the same hill where he use to climb, sit on the top all by himself and plan out his dreams and how to give shape to them. He was eighty-four but he kept climbing the hill while I who was half his age could only look at him in awe and wonder which I was to do till he finally left for London never to come back, ever.

Poona was Dev Saahab's city that day as anyone and everyone had only one thing to talk about and that was Dev Anand's being in Poona after sixty years. Dev Saahab had a series of meetings of which he cancelled many when he realised that there were huge crowds wanting to meet him, see him, touch him and blow kisses at him. But it was not destined to be a very happy for me. Dev Sahab had a PRO called who had brought his family with him and had checked into a posh hotel, while we journalists were pushed into what looked like a dormitory with four of us packed like sardines in a tin and even had to pay for our tea. I tolerated the PRO's misbehave till five pm and then quietly left for the station, got into a taxi for Mumbai and came back.

That night I received a call from Mr Chugh who was Dev Saahab's production controller. He asked me where I was because Dev Sahab was panicking and asking everyone where I had vanished. I did not let my anger show to Mr Chugh. At two am when I was trying to sleep, I received a call, it was Dev Sahab. I told him the truth about what had happened and he asked me to come to the office the next afternoon.

I reached his office only to know that he had politely sacked his PRO who was working with him for years. I asked him why he had to take such a drastic decision and he said, “Insulting and humiliating my friend is insulting and humiliating me. I can take anything but not such bad behaviour which gives me and more than me, my company, Navketan a bad name".

That was the last time the name of that PRO figured in any of our many conversations. And I don't think it is an achievement of my long career in any way because the man was wrong and deserved the punishment which Dev gave him.

DEV ANAND'S PENTHOUSE MAY HAVE VANISHED, BUT IT WILL LIVE IN MY HEART

Ever since I crushed my foot on a November morning, I have been forced to cut down on all my gallivanting and going around places and meeting people who luckily for me were always willing to welcome me. It was some kind of rule with me to spend every Tuesday with Dev Anand first in his bungalow and then driving with him in his blue Fiat (6105) to his pent house at Anand in Pali Hill.

It was only last week that I had the opportunity or rather the misfortune to pass through the Iris House bungalow of Dev Anand and I could feel my heart break. There were no signs of any life around the house of the man whose name itself meant LIFE. The old Impala car in which he drove when he was a big and young star had vanished. There was a rare kind of darkness even before the sun could set in the nearby sea. I kept waiting to see someone I could have known and finally I saw Dev Sahab's right hand man coming out from a corner of the bungalow. He must have been in his eighties, but he recognised me and I don't know why he started crying. I asked him who was inside the bungalow and he said there was only meimsahab (Kalpana Kartik or Mona as Dev Sahab called her, who he said had become a holy woman who had turned into a complete Christian and was conducting religious sessions with some of her close friends. I asked him where Suneil was and he looked disgusted and said, “itne ache baap ko Bhagwan ne itna nalayak beta kaise diya, maloom nahi? "Suneil was out of the house and the country for more than a year and the police in different countries were looking out for him on a complaint made by his producer-partner Dean Bakshi as he had cheated him of a huge sum of money while making a film called “Vagator Mixer". He had come to Mumbai only for two days some months ago and then vanished and had not been seen or heard of since then. The old man had his last say when he said, “Dev Sahab the toh yahan janaat thi, aajkal yahan sirf jahanoom hai. Main bhi thode din mein nikal jaaunga, phir na jaane woh naalayak beta iss shandaar bangle ko

kiske haath bech dega". I walked away from the bungalow and realised that my heart was not beating in the regular way. My heart always beat abnormally whenever I think about Dev Sahab or anything to do with him.

Fifty years ago, there was only one bungalow in this area with the army cantonment as the only other known place.

Dev Anand who had come from Gurdaspur in Punjab with a degree in English Literature had come to Bombay like many other young men like him. He too wanted to be an actor and succeeded before many others could even start.

A stage came when there were only three legends in the industry, Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand was so much in demand that he could have signed all the films that came his way and make lakhs of rupees those days, but he made it a rule to work in only five films in a year and who years later said, 'if I had signed all the films that came to me, I could have bought at least half of Bombay'. The other two legends built their own bungalows, Dilip Kumar on Pali Hill and Raj Kapoor in Deonar, Chembur where he also built RK Studios (now gone to the Godrejs).

Dev Anand had always wanted to be away from the crowd and so selected a spot in Juhu which was only known for its beach and the local people who were known as East Indians and were mostly Roman Catholics. Dev Anand built his bungalow like one of the bungalows in some holiday resort and lived with his actress-wife Kalpana Kartik and their two children, Suneil and Devina.

He was at peace for several years till some sharks saw in Juhu the ideal place to come up with bungalows, hotels and soon Juhu was one of the many crowded localities and Dev's bungalow stood in a corner with an identity of its own. He was shocked when buildings came up all around his house and there were several smaller stars who took the cue from Dev Anand and built their own homes, well-known names like Manoj Kumar Dharmendra, Dara Singh, Jeetendra, Dimple Kapadia, Denzongpa and Amitabh Bachchan who has four bungalows in Juhu now. These are besides

the any number of filmmakers, writers and composers who either built their own homes or lived in posh apartments that came up all over and ruined the beauty of Juhu…

Other bungalows came up like the bungalow of Ajay Devgan opposite the bungalow of Dharmendra and there were three multiplexes which came up and so did several malls and department stores. The traffic had grown beyond control and Dev Anand was feeling sick living in the bungalow he had built with so much love and care in which he had a library, a dining hall, a place for visitors who had to wait and a huge ground behind the bungalow where he use to have his grand parties once and used it for his regular morning walks. Now, he had neighbours like Madhuri Dixit and Dimple Kapadia living in apartments which were also known as Iris Park which was once the exclusive address of Dev Anand…

Dev Anand who was not facing the best of financial times as a filmmaker sold his office-cum recording studio, 'Anand' on Pali Hill on the advice of his son, Suneil and his health deteriorated as soon as his office and studio made way for a multi-storeyed building which looked ugly when compared to the bungalow in which he had his pent house where he did most of his planning, thinking and writing (he wrote every page of his autobiography in his own handwriting in the same pent house). He however was never the same Dev after he lost his pent house and was literally pushed into a one-room apartment in a building called 'Riddhi' where he sat alone after three pm and looked forty years older and it was a painful experience meeting a man who was a special creation of the Dev (God) above and was always so full of life. He celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday at the same Sun n Sand hotel where he lived in a suite (number 339), but he was not the enthusiast Dev was and even as people were coming together for the party he was to have, he sent for me and I was with him for almost an hour when he kept repeating, "maza nahi aa raha Ali, bilkul maza nahi aa raha hai. How can a free bird like Dev live in a cage and be controlled by other people (he meant his son, Suneil, who was now taking all the major decisions for Navketan, his sixty year old company and some managers he had appointed). "I cannot forget that one minute when he just held me close to him and I could see tears flowing down his eyes and he said, "Ali, I want to tell you something that I have not told you before. You are more

than my son and I have always taken you as my son. "Our meeting ended on a very solemn and sad note, but once he came down to the lawns and the swimming pool, he was back to being the Dev Anand he always was.

A few days later, his son Suneil and Dev flew to London without letting anyone know the reason. They were living in Dev's favourite hotel in London, The Dorchester. One night he asked Suneil for a glass of water (in all my years that I knew him, I had never seen him drinking water or eating a proper meal during any time of the day). Suneil says he went up (?) to get him the water and that when he came back with a water, Dev had gone away forever, just the way he wanted to go when his time was up, as he had written in his autobiography. . .

My fascination, love and absolute worship for this Dev on earth makes me go mad when I think about him and write above him and I have never needed any excuse to remember him or write about him. Believe it or not, another legend like Manoj Kumar who knows about my love for 'Dev Sahab' sent me a video of some of the best songs of Dev Sahab which I have made it a rule to listen to at least five of his songs before I finally go to sleep.

But why am I writing about Dev Sahab now? It is out of sheer agony that I am forced to write this piece for at least some sensible people to listen to and seriously do something about.

Right opposite Dev Sahab's bungalow where his wife the eighty-six years old Kalpana Kartik lives all alone is the open JVPD ground where grand wedding receptions and political and cultural events are held and attended by so called civilised and educated people. they are civilised till they have to urinate and the ground and the committee that runs the everyday working have not had the sense to think of having facilities for this very important function of every human being. and so the civilised people use the space opposite Dev Sahab's bungalow as an open urinal at a time when we have the first ever prime minister who has made urinating or defecation almost a crime. but who cares! he is busy being in his election mode again and others are too busy doing their own meaningful and mostly meaningless things and who had the time to cast a look on the open insult being done to one of the

greatest legends of Indian cinema and one of the greatest Indians.

Will the Bombay Municipal Corporation or any other power do something about this crime which has now also to be faced by Madhuri, Dimple, so many other families and above all the soldiers of our army who protect us against any enemy but find themselves helpless and hopeless before these enemies who spread dirt all over the place in spite of a notice being put up to keep away these urinating criminals to commit their crimes in the open and without any shame or respect for not only the memory of Dev Anand, but all human beings.

What is the Prime Minister Swachhata Abhiyaan doing about this shame?

MUJRIM SHRI DEV ANAND, HAAZIR HO!!!

My stories about Dev Anand can never end unless I come to an end. I have been writing about him for so long that there are some of my well-wishers as well as my critics, Dev (god) bless them have started calling me "DevDas. . "!

Can you ever imagine the most honest and hardworking man I have ever known being charged with cheating and being dragged to a dingy, dark and dungeon like court in Bandra which Devsaab had never even seen although he lived in Bombay (Mumbai) for more than 6 decades.

His gate had "Anand" where he had his tent House and the most well equipped post production studio in Asia, was always open and anyone could walk up to his office which was more like his house or his palace as I called it.

One afternoon a man dressed in a suit walked in and rushed towards Devsaab and tried to touch his feet which Devsaab didn't ever allow anyone. The man said his name was and he was a leading businessman in Denmark and his dream was to produce a film with Devsaab as the hero and director. Devsaab asked him to tell him more about himself and when the man started begging and pleading of him to do the film Devsaab who had never directed a film for any other banner till then except Navketan agreed to fulfil the man's request.

He got together a team, mostly of newcomers and the unit left for Denmark.

Devsaab was dumbfounded when he saw that the man who said he was a leading business man was just the owner of a little grocery shop and had an apartment in a building which could collapse anytime so the first thing that Devsaab did was to move into one of the best hotels and made Harwani to get his unit the best accommodation or he would not proceed with the film shoot. Harwani had to agree.

The man agreed to all the conditions of Devsaab and halfway through the film, he told Devsaab that he had run out of money. Devsaab found himself in a trap from which he found it difficult to escape because his name was involved and so he arranged for the rest of the money from his office and somehow completed the film called " pyar ka taraana"

And when he came back he said it was the worst experience of his career.

But the worst had yet to come. That man in Denmark sent Devsaab a legal notice charging him with defrauding him of money. Devsaab couldn't help it but he also couldn't give up without putting up a fight. He had to receive summons from the Metropolitan court in Bandra and had to attend the court. His arrival in the otherwise dismal atmosphere of the Court brought all work to a standstill. The case finally came up for hearing and was dismissed by the Magistrate for want of substantial evidence to prove whatever the man had charged him for and Devsaab walked out Free, but the hurt and the humiliation was something he could not forget. Harwani was a leech and came back to Bombay and tried to put all kinds of pressure on Devsaab. He was so shameless that even though he knew what my relationship with Dev Saab was, he tried to bribe me to write against Devsaab. When I turned down his offer he tried to take advantage of my weakness for alcohol and took me to cheap hotels and I had to throw him out after calling in some friends of mine. . . who threatened him and Harwani was never heard of or seen again.

DEV DEV THE. UNNKO NAA KOI DHARTI KAA NYAALAY NAA AASMAN KA NYAALAY MAAN SAKTAA HAI, NAA AAJ, NAA KAL, NAA ISS DUNIYAA MEIN YAA NAA USS DUNIYAA MEIN.

DEV SAHAB APNE CHAAHNE WAALO KO UTNA HI CHAAHTE THE

I had the privilege of being asked by the Mangeshkar family to invite Amitabh Bachchan as a chief guest and to present Lata Mangeshkar with the prestigious Hridayesh Award named after her younger brother, Pandit Hridaynath Mangeshkar and Amitabh didn't even ask one question before he gladly agreed and only asked him to remind him about the function on the morning it was to happen. The day dawned, evening came and it was time for Amitabh to arrive at the Shanmukhananda Auditorium and I knew for sure that he would not come late even though he had to come all the way from Film City, where he was shooting all day. I stood waiting for him at the entrance and he was there 10 minutes before 6:30 p. m. , the time fixed for the function to start. I was too excited even though I was receiving him add a function for the umpteenth time. I rushed towards him to welcome him, but before I could reach him, he made a sign asking me to stop as his security guards in black tried to surround me and he murmured, “take care Ali, they may harm you". It was the first time I got scared meeting Amitabh. I had many other occasions to face similar situations with stars, big and small, here and nowhere for whom having a wall of security guards had become a prestige issue and a way of life and every time this happened, I don't know why I always remembered my all-time favourite human being who was a living legend and more, Dev Anand. . . .

I had spent some of the best years of my life with him and in accompanying him to several places in and around India (he also wanted me to be with him during his various trips abroad, but I had my own reasons not to go with him, the main reason being that I never even applied for a passport after the Passport Office in Bombay created a ruckus about my name).

It was during my days with Dev (as he loved calling himself and loved others calling him the same, even though very few could call him Dev and everyone, even the young ended up calling him Dev Sahab, which became like his real name).

Dev Saheb had his own ways of treating his legions of fans. He never gave any reason to any of his fans to have a grouse against him. Even when he had his office in Khira Nagar in Santacruz, he had issued standing instructions to all his staff to see that no one who came to meet him as a fan was stopped and was allowed to walk up to his cabin which was at the other end of the floor on which all the Navketan offices were. He made everyone feel comfortable in his presence and gave them all a patient hearing and let them leave with huge sighs of joy and relief, because they couldn't believe that it would be so easy to meet and talk to Dev Anand, one of the three major legends of Hindi cinema, Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor being the other two.

Soon, Dev Sahab shifted to 'Anand', the bungalow on Pali Hill which was gifted to him by Mr Larsen of Larsen & Toubro before he left India. Dev Saheb had his own penthouse on the second floor of the bungalow, which he had personally designed and decorated. It was the same when it came to his fans. They could come right up to the gate and just tell the ordinary security guards that they wanted to see Dev Sahab and the security guards would call him and he would instantly say, "mat Roko, mat Roko unhe. Vah mere log Hain, unke Bina main kuchh bhi nahin hun". The fans would find it difficult to believe that the Dev Anand would invite them to meet him personally so soon and Dev Sahab continued to be the loving and caring human being he was more than the superstar and the legend he was. He often apologized to his fans for not being able to serve them any snacks, tea, coffee or cold drinks because he did not hide the fact from them that he never ate or drank anything, not even a glass of water when he was working at his penthouse or when he was shooting. All he could offer them was some dry chanas, which popping into his mouth whenever he felt. You cannot forget Dev, so what he is gone away?

The mortal body of the immortal Dev Anand left ten years ago. He was a free spirit and like a true spirit he died just as he wanted in his hotel room in his favourite city London. He wanted to go like a bubble floating down a river and that is how he went. His mortal remains were preserved in a cemetery in London, while millions of his devotees waited at the Mehboob Studios to bid him farewell, but they didn't know that a Dev Anand never had the reason to be sent away because he was always here, with us, with

them, with the whole world.

His office in Khira Nagar is now a commercial complex.

His office at ' Anand ' is a twenty storeyed residential complex on Pali Hill where his son, Suneil has his plush office on the nineteenth floor, a floor on which Dev was supposed to have his own office and his recording studio. All that remains of the era of Dev Anand is a blackboard of golden letters, 'Anand'.

And in a silent corner of the busy as busy suburb of Juhu stands his bungalow Iris park which looks as if it is waiting for him to return home.

And in every corner of the world live millions of memories of a man who was born eternal and can never die like normal mortals die.

DEV JAISAA "BOSS" AUR KAHAN ?

I have seen Dev Anand in all his avtaars and I claim that I still don't know enough of him. . .

Dev Sahab was many men to many, but very few people know that he was a very loving, caring and a compassionate " boss " working for his company, Navketan Films. Like he had a knack of discovering talent in different fields of filmmaking, he also had the art of finding people to work in his office in Bombay and Delhi, besides other smaller cities.

I had the good fortune of seeing him interact with his staff most of whom worked with him till they voluntarily opted out because of old age or some ailment or accident. . .

Most of those who worked for him were men and women who had joined him during the formation of Navketan Films. He had his office in Khira Nagar in Santacruz in a building which looked like a train and had his cabin at the far end of it, with his close staff working in different cubicles in the same "compartment " on the first floor. And among them was a young man called Amit Khanna who Dev Sahab had spotted in his distribution office in Delhi and had promoted to the post of corruption controller.

There were his senior staffers like Mr Pisharpti who was his accounts manager ever since he had started Navketan Films and had not only worked with him but haf never taken leave of any kind. There were his juniors and other regular staff. But the one person Dev Sahab never let go from his office was his office receptionist and secretary, Mrs Fernandes.

This staff followed Dev Sahab when he shifted his office to "Anand " where he his pent house and his dubbing and recording studio which was managed by another Dev bhakt called V K Sood. The entire office was situated close to Dev Sahab's pent house so that he could be in constant touch with any member of the staff.

I once asked the entire staff why they were not willing to leave Dev

Sahab for better prospects and message Fernandes speaking on behalf of all them said, " How can we think of leaving a boss who has always paid us in time and according to the work we do and who loves us all so much that he is like the head of our families at all times".

Dev Sahab had a driver who refused to leave him even when he had grown very old and Dev Sahab made it a point to send his salary to his family for years. This driver was replaced by Prem who found a glorious opportunity of finding a job in Dubai where he had all the comforts of life. Dev Sahab, the free spirit let prem go as he believed at no one who wants to leave must be stopped. Three months later, Prem came back to Bombay and asked Dev Sahab to take him as his driver again. They were more like friends that the boss and the driver. Sometimes when Dev Sahab used to work till very late in the night he made Prem drive till he reached his home in a slum and then drove home himself. Life was never the same for Prem after Dev Sahab died and the shock of living without Dev Sahab had such a severe impact on him that he turned an alcoholic and was found walking drunk on the same roads where he was known as Dev Sahab's driver and three months later, I was informed that he had died with his last words being "Dev Sahab, Dev Sahab".

Towards the end Dev Sahab had some bad experiences with a man who promised Dev Sahab that he would take care of his dubbing and recording studio that man not only cheated Dev Sahab of money, but had his own recording studio in the suburbs of Andheri. When I brought this to the notice of Dev Sahab, he just said, " theek hain, theek hai, woh paise hi le gaya, meri takdeer ko thode hi le gayaa" a few months after Dev Sahab died, that had to shut down his new recording studio.

KYAA WOH DEV SAHAB KE SAATH HERA PHERI KARNE KI SAZAA THI ?

THE LITTLE OUTSIDER WHO FOUND A PLACE IN THE HEARTS OF SOME VERY GREAT INSIDERS

Some good people and many bad people (the number of the latter keeps growing) wonder why I keep bringing my mother into some of the pieces I write and how I wish I could tell them all that it is my humble way of paying my tribute to my simple but great mother who I lost more than fifty - five years ago. I would not have been if she would not have brought me into this world and I would certainly not be what I am if it was not for her constant support, strength and inspiration even though she was an ordinary woman who didn't even have a formal education. She was more worried about me than her other two sons and was concerned about what I would do in a world where man would bite man. She however couldn't fulfill her dream for me as she died leaving me an orphan when I was fifteen. I am nearing seventy now and my greatest regret in life is that I don't have my mother to see what I have tried to achieve in life. The few stories below would have delighted my mother and I give you the stories to judge for yourself if what the boy who was his poor mothers son has been a kind of success or not. . .

I was sitting in my office at the Express Towers when I received a call from Mr. Sudhir Rahate, the Public Relations Officer of Rajshri Pictures. He asked me if I was free the next afternoon at 3. pm. I wanted to say, "Arre baba, apun ke paas time hi time hai", but the he talked to me with a certain kind of respect stopped me from saying anything like that and I asked him what the matter was. He said the Rajshri family wanted me to see their new film, "Hum Apke Hain Kon "in their preview theatre at Prabhadevi. I told him I would be there. I had heard some learned people talk about the film as a "shaadi ka antakshri" and calling it other frivolous names, but I wanted to know the truth about it myself and so I reached"Bhavana", the old building in which the Rajshris had their offices and the preview theatre on two floors.

I was taken by absolute surprise when all the Barjatya brothers and Sooraj Kumar Barjatya, the director of the film were waiting for me as if I was some VIP. They were all humility personified and after some hot tea and biscuits, I was led into the theatre. I waited for some other guests, but the only man who came in was Seth , the founder of the Rajshri empire and I literally held my breath because I had heard reliable stories about how he had come to Bombay with nothing and how he had built his empire, which was so much like the story of Ramnath Goenka who had come to Bombay with nothing and had built the Indian Express Group of Newspapers all over India. . . .

Sethji came and sat in the seat next to mine and started telling me about his empire and soon asked for the lights to go off and the film to start. I was transported to another world where a grand Indian marriage was being celebrated with a lot of Indian music and emotions. I could see Sethji looking at me enjoying what was going on and He left a little before the interval and I was left all alone till the film ended. I had never loved watching a film for almost three and a half hours and walked out in a happy daze. . . .

Till I was brought to the reality when I saw the Rajshri men standing in a line with folded hands and I didn't know what to do for say till Rajkumar Barjatya (God bless his soul), the father of Sooraj whispered into my ear and asked what I thought about the film. I told him that it would run for years then for some more years. He couldn't believe what I was saying and then they all looked at me in disbelief and I kept telling them the same thing again and again and they kept folding their hands. I finally said I was not a film critic or a reviewer or an expert, but only an ordinary filmgoer and film lover and that is what I felt about the film. I had two more glasses of tea and left for my office. And what happened to "HAHK" is colourful part of Indian film history.

DEV SAHAB LIKED GIVING CREDIT WHERE DESERVED. . .

HE WAS AN ADMIRER OF AMITABH BACHCHAN

It was the early seventies and Rajesh Khanna was the first superstar. The editor of a leading film fortnightly and her staff had gone to meet Dev Anand, which was their routine visit to him whenever someone in the office felt low, sad and depressed. Dev Sahab was like a cure for all sadness, they believed. During their talk with Dev Sahab, the editor asked him what he thought about the phenomenon called Rajesh Khanna and he just said, "talk to me after twenty five years " and didn't mention the subject again. It was like a prediction for Rajesh Khanna, whose superstardom vanished within twenty five years. . . .

The story about how Dev Sahab was the first choice to play Inspector Vijay in "Zanjeer" is too well-known to be repeated by me here. And how a still struggling Amitabh Bachchan played the role and took away superstardom from Rajesh Khanna is also a well known fact of film history now. . . .

If there was one man who welcomed Amitabh and even said Amitabh was the right choice to play the role in "Zanjeer", it was Dev Sahab. . . . .

It was the year 1984. . . Amitabh Bachchan had entered politics and was a leading Member of Parliament of the Congress Party. Dev Sahab was always known as the voice of dissent and was known as the man who had political views that were against the party in power. Mr. Shyam Kajaria who was the founder of an organisation called Cinegoers Club managed to organised a meet with Dev Sahab and Amitabh at the Sun n Sand hotel. The meet was to be held at seven thirty in the morning as both Dev Sahab and Amitabh were fighting with time. The entire press of Bombay (it was not Mumbai then)assembled at the Sun n Sand, it was the first time ever that a press meet was arranged at seven thirty in the morning and the

attendance of the press was unprecedented and the excitement was at its peak. . . . .

The press expected fire works, but the two legends of two different generations turned out to be masters at dealing with a situation like the one they had found themselves in. All the expectations of the excited press received its first set back when Amitabh touched the feet of Dev Sahab who embraced him warmly and with one of his best smiles. The two legends kept praising each other and the press meet ended in a big disappointment for the journalists, but it stayed on to become a memorable occasion for many. . . . .

Dev Sahab was all ready to release one of his new films. It was time to release the music of the film. Dev Sahab wanted Amitabh to release the music, but was hesitant. He asked me if Amitabh would come if he invited him. I gave him Amitabhs number and asked him to call. He called and when Dev Sahab finished talking, he had a bright smile on his face and said, "Ali, Amitabh maan gaya, woh aayegaa ". Amitabh had one condition. He told Dev Sahab, "Aap mere ghar se hokar Sun n Sand jaayege . Mera ghar pass mein hi hai. Aap kabhi mere ghar nahi aaye. Please drop in for a few minutes and we will then go to your function together". Dev Sahab went to "Jalsa" and saw Amitabh and Jaya waiting for him. The Bachchans made Dev Sahab comfortable. Amitabh had one good look at Dev Sahab and excused himself, went up. When Amitabh came down, he was wearing a trouser and a shirt which were exact replicas of the clothes that Dev Sahab had worn for his occasion. The two were major highlights at Dev Sahabs event. . . . .

Dev Sahab had just released his autobiography, "Romancing With Life ".

The then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had his birthday on the same day as Dev Sahab. Dev Sahab asked me if the Prime Minister would release his book. I don't know why the great Dev Sahab had to ask me that question. I asked Dev Sahab to call the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister told Dev Sahab that he would only be too glad to release his book, but he told him it was his birthday too on September 26 and asked Dev

Sahab to release his autobiography at his residence, and what a way Dev's autobiography was released by the Prime Minister (Incidentally, Dev had made a film called 'Mr. Prime Minister' towards the last stages of his career).

DEV ANAND SWEPT ME OFF MY FEET WHEN I WAS SEVENTEEN

I STILL LOVE DEV SAHAB AT SEVENTY, I WILL LOVE DEV THE ETERNAL ANAND TILL THE DEV ABOVE INVITES ME TO THE ULTIMATE PARTY

I don't mind or I don't even care about what people will say when I say that I fell in love with the magic of Dev Anand when I was just out of school. I have continued loving Dev Anand for the last forty years and I know, sorry, I am sure that my love for Dev Sahab will never diminish, fade away or die. . . . . .

I was just out of school and had joined a college in Sion in Bombay I was always short of money and depended on economic freeships and scholarships. It was in the very third month of my first year in college when I had received a scholarship of hundred and seventy five rupees. I thought of the best way of spending the money and decided to buy a cycle which would help me travel to college, which otherwise took me one hour of walking and two hours of traveling by bus.

I bought a brand new Hercules cycle for which I had to pay exactly the amount I had received as my first major scholarship. I was a hero in my village when I drove the new cycle home.

I was in a state of excitement all through the afternoon, evening and the night. I had planned to take the cycle to church the next morning to ask god to bless it and me.

There was a film called "Jab Pyaar Kisise Hota Hai" to be shown at the Sangam cinema which came between my home and the church. I had one rupee in my pocket and that was the price of a ticket to see the film at Sangam which was then the only theatre in Bombay which boasted of an elevator, besides being air-conditioned. The film had Dev Anand and Asha Parekh in leading roles. I had become a fan of Asha Parekh after I had first seen her in a film called "Dil Deke Dekho" and then in "Ziddi". It was

going to be the opening of a long inning I was destined to play with almost all the films of Dev Anand. . . . . .

I parked my brand new cycle outside the church and went in to pray. I came back after thirty minutes only to see that my cycle had vanished. I tried looking for it and asked a few holy people if they had seen my dear new cycle and they all looked at me as if I was the thief. I finally threw up my hands and told myself "what is gone will not come back" and I rushed to the Sangam cinema and bought a ticket and settled down in a seat and for the next three hours I was lost in the world of Dev Anand (and Asha Parekh) and the mind-blowing songs. And not for a moment did I think about my lost cycle.

I reached home walking and my friends asked me where my new cycle was and I told them, "cycle hawa ho gayee". They were in no mood for my flippant attitude to my what they called "a tragedy". Soon, the entire village came to know about my great "loss " and put pressure on me to make a complaint at the nearest police station. I went alone even though I didn't want to go. I went to the police officer on duty and timidly told him, "sahab, meri cycle chori ho gayi" and before I could say anything more, the police officer called a constable and told him in Marathi "yaala aat gya "(take this fellow inside). The constable led me to a cell where I saw a large wooden plank with a heavy wooden baton next to it. I saw danger and burst into English and told the officer the same thing in English and the officer on duty said, "arre tereko English aati hai, pehle bolne ka tha na ".

I didn't want to wait there for a moment more and I ran for my life. I had vowed never to go anywhere near a police station and I succeeded for the next forty years or more till a nasty cheater of a woman thought she would get me into trouble and failed. . . . . I never thought about the cycle again, but I knew I was drunk on the dazzling magic of Dev Anand. . .

Watching Dev Anand in that film "Jab Pyaar Kisise Hota Hai" got me addicted to Dev Anand and I Kept watching every film with him as the hero, I saw all his old black and white films at matinee shows in theatres all over the city mostly traveling by trains without a ticket.

THE DAY DEV SAHAB CRIED WHEN SURAIYA DIED. . . .

Anyone who knows anything about Hindi cinema during the last eighty years cannot say or pretend to be ignorant or innocent about the undying love story of Dev Anand and Suraiya. . .

Suraiya was a star -singer who was younger than the upcoming actor Dev Anand who was ambitious, handsome, educated and full of the drive to make his dreams come true. It could only be the plan of God or maybe destiny that brought Dev and Suraiya together and they went on to do several films as the romantic lead, which ultimately led to one of the most talked about romances of the time. They could have worked in many more films and could have even got married even though Suraiya was always a bigger star than Dev, but as is well known know, it was Suraiya's grandmother who was against her daughter marrying a struggling actor like Dev and especially because he was a Hindu. The lovers still met from time to time with the help of some mutual friends. The grandmother's torment became worse with the passing of time and a time came when Suraiya had to sacrifice her love for Dev. And the last meeting the lovers ended up in her grandmother throwing the ring Dev had presented to Suraiya into the sea outside Suraiya's apartment on Marine Drive. A completely heart-broken and shattered Dev who couldn't take the parting drove to the Mehboob Studios where he was shooting with his leading lady, Kalpana Kartik for "Taxi Driver ", proposed to her and married her while their shooting was on and had taken a break to get married. . . .

Dev and Suraiya never met again for the next forty years or more, but their love for each other was still the same. I had many occasions to listen to Dev Sahab talking about their love story and there were times when he grew extremely emotional and sometimes said, "not all love stories have a good and happy end, but I wish our story could have been different ". On the other hand, Suraiya never got married and lived with the memories of Dev Saahab and their love story.

"Screen", the weekly I worked for had decided to present Suraiya with a

Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002 and she agreed to accept it because she knew one of my colleagues, and her family well. And she kept asking Piroj (God bless her soul) whether Dev Saahab would be attending the awards function and Piroj kept telling her that Dev Saahab never missed any event or function organized by "Screen ". And when I told Dev Saahab about Suraiya, he looked very sad which was a mood unknown to him and sad, "I hope you understand, Ali achha nahi lagega, I have not seen her or talked to her on the phone for forty two years, please let me be this time, I know we both will not be able to take it ".

I didn't have to persuade Dev Sahab because I knew that if he said no to anything, no one could make him change his mind.

Suraiya was looking lost at the Awards function even though the entire crowd had its eyes focused on her. And the next day, Dev Sahab was eager and excited to know from me how Suraiya looked, whether she had flowers in her hair and what kind of a saari she had worn and what she said in her speech. I have seen an experienced love in its truest and its most pristine form, but I have still to see two lovers living in love even though time and circumstances had made them part ways. . .

January 31, 2004 was a black day for Dev Sahab, it was the day Suraiya had died. I still don't know why he called me to his Pent House as I had come to know about Suraiya's death and I thought he would have liked to be left alone on this day.

I however went and was surprised to see his Pent House locked. His driver, Prem who had worked with him for years and knew most of his secrets told me that Dev Sahab was waiting for me on the terrace of "Anand ". I saw Dev Sahab sitting all by himself in some kind of a tent. He had asked his staff to build the place overnight and asked them to provide him with a separate telephone connection. He told me that he was not going to take any phone calls. And he stood by his decision, but we spent the whole day talking about Suraiya and those gloriously romantic days.

THE FIRST WOMAN IN DEV ANAND'S LIFE

It was the day when the world suffered two big shocks. Princess Diana had died in a ghastly car accident in London and Mother Teresa died in Calcutta. Television was showing the last journey of both, Princess Dianas in London and Mother Teresa's hearse going through the streets of Calcutta, a city she had turned into a city of joy by her dedication and service to the poorest of the poor, the sick and the dying for more than fifty years. Dev Anand who was basically a very shy and sensitive man was in a grieving mood, but he also had a commitment to keep, he had to go to Poona on the invitation of one of the powerful politician, Suresh Kalmadi, who wanted Dev Sahab to be the chief guest at a function organized by him. As was usual during those days, Dev Sahab called me and requested me to join him in his trip to Poona. We left in his Fiat car with only his driver of several years, Prem who was driving. Dev Sahab continued to be in a sombre mood till we drove out of the city and then surprised me when he asked Prem to sit back and he took the steering and continued to drive (he was eighty years old at that time)and he kept driving and said, "these roads have been my friends for years and we know each other very well ". We were slowly coming into his own self and was Dev Anand all over again. But as we approached the road leading to Poona, he suddenly had second thoughts about our coming to Poona. He asked me if Kalmadi would still have the function in spite of the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa. I said he should not have the function if he had any sense or conscience. Dev Sahab asked me, "Ali, don't you think it will be wrong for me to attend a function on this sad day ?"We reached Poona and found out that Kalmadi's function had been cancelled. But Kalmadi was very much there at the venue and asked Dev Sahab to go with him to his house. Dev Sahab reluctantly agreed and when we reached Kalmadi's palatial house, we found hundreds of people waiting for Dev Sahab. The table was laid out with the most delicious snacks with men in uniform waiting to serve Dev Sahab and me. Kalmadi told Dev Sahab that the plates and all the crockery and forks and spoons were all made of pure gold. I could see

Dev Sahab wincing in his chair and looking very restless. Kalmadi kept requesting Dev Sahab to stay on for the night as his function was postponed to the next day. Dev Sahab got up from his chair, had a piece of a sandwich and told Kalmadi that he would not wait even for ten minutes more and rushed to his car, asked me to get in and we were soon on the road to Bombay. . . .

It was nine thirty in the night when we reached and Dev Sahab asked me to go with him to his Pent House.

He normally did not have any thing heavy to eat all day and nibbled at dry chanas (gram) when he felt hungry, ordered for some sandwiches from a place called Candies which was his favourite place and asked for some tea for me.

We were talking about a song he was to record with Rajesh Roshan the next day when I saw tears forming in his eyes. He tried to wipe them away, but the tears rolled down his cheeks. I had never seen him like this. I asked him what the matter was and he said, "Mother Teresa and her death reminded me of my mother who I lost sixty years ago ".

I tried to ask him more about his mother and the words just came flowing from a grateful son who had forgotten that he was Dev Anand, the living legend. . . . .

He told me his mother's face was the first face of a woman he had seen and had got close to her and the feeling was mutual. He grew up as his mother's favourite son. He realized that his mother was very sick when he was around fifteen years old and never left her side as long as he was at home. He told me how he used to go to far away places to buy goat's milk which was very essential for his mother's treatment and he even travelled from Gurdaspur, his birth place to Amritsar to buy medicines for her. He used to spend many evenings sitting with his mother. Life was meaningful for Dev in Gurdaspur only till his mother was alive and after she died he moved on.

DEV SAHAB ADMIRED RISHI KAPOOR WHOM HE CALLED MY "SON"

If I Knew one thing about Dev Anand (who like many of his admirers I to called Dev Sahab) it was his ability to speak out his mind and say what he wanted to say without thinking or worrying about the consequences. He was known for speaking out his mind on politics and politicians and sometimes had to pay a very heavy price for it, but he never could be cowed down, coerced or forced to change his opinion. He was perhaps the only film personality who could make politicians, journalists and other opinion makers listen to him and take him seriously. I had seen and heard him talk to some of the most powerful politicians and editors of newspapers and convinced them about his point of view and I had also seen him turning down some of the most tempting offers made by politicians and those in power to get him on their side and how he remained to be his own man and his own opinion maker. What does one say about a man like Dev Sahab who could turn down offers of several acres of land, bungalows and offers to set up industries and his own business according to his own preferences and choices ? What does one say about a man who could take the "punishment " of the powers that be for opposing them or even making a comment about them in one of his films or give an interview to a leading daily airing his strong opinions about an issue or a subject that was important for the nation and its people who he always held in high esteem because he always believed that it was the people who ultimately mattered in a democracy ? What does one say about a daring man who could face the slaughter of his films by the censors and still not give up his fight against whatever and whoever was wrong and worked against the interests of the country and its people, the people who he was concerned about and talked about till the end of his life ?

And like Dev Sahab had his opinions about politics and politicians and the government and the opposition, he also had his own opinions about actors which he also gave expression to without mincing his words without

worrying about what impact his words would have on others. He believed in coming up with the truth because he said "only when the truth is told and faced can we think of going ahead and taking this country forward ".

He held Ashok Kumar in great respect and called him "a father figure who guided me and other actors of my time ". He had his own way of looking at what people called the competition or rivalry between him, Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar. In one of his talks with me, he said, "we never thought of competition, rivalry and other such petty matters. We knew where we stood and what our limitations were. Yusuf (Dilip Kumar)was a very serious actor and excelled in playing tragic roles and had to change to playing light roles and comic characters in his later films on the advice of doctors. The fact however remains that Yusuf is a complete actor. Raj had groomed himself into playing the tramp with a golden heart and had a very strong influence of Charlie Chaplin in his acting. He however kept growing and became one of the leading filmmakers of the country. He could have been a greater actor and a much better filmmaker if he had not lived his own life recklessly, which is the truth about him. I was in a class of my own. I was branded as a romantic hero and was doing very well for myself but gradually I realised the need to grow out of the image and try doing other roles and I must say I succeeded. I also took to having my own banner and company under which I could make the films I wanted to. Believe me, Ali if I had done all the films that were offered to me, I would have been one of the richest men in Bombay, but I did only five films in a year, a number which I further cut down to three and even two when I became a filmmaker. Yusuf, Raj and me could have ruled the industry, but we had our own principles and priorities and that is why we are what we are and will be remembered for. "

WHEN DEV ANAND'S ADVICE CHANGED THE CAREER OF SADHANA

It was 1962. Dev Anand was already a legend and had worked with all the big female stars. It was at this time that Sadhana had become a major star after doing a string of successful films. She was offered two big films at the same time, “Asli Naqli" with Dev and “Mere Mehboob", a Muslim social with the Jubilee Star Rajendra Kumar. Sadhana was in a fix about doing“Mere Mehboob" because she did not feel confident about doing the role. She talked to Dev who advised her not to give up the film under any circumstances because he told her that if the film had Rajendra Kumar in it, there must be something special about it. Sadhana did what “Asli Naqli " and “Mere Mehboob" and Dev Anand's advice to her worked wonders as “Mere Mehboob" turned out to be a superhit and a cult film, making Sadhana a superstar and giving the female Muslim character in films a new image.

SOME STARS ROSE IN POLITICS, SOME FELL BY THE WAYSIDE

There was a time when film stars were taken as tamashawalas by politicians and others in high places and by those sitting in their ivory towers, but there was always a connection with the stars because of their amazing crowd-drawing power, but no one till the eighties could imagine that these filmwalas would play a very important part in the politics of the country and in different states, but the truth today is that the game of politics cannot be played without star power, whether some hard-core politicians agree or not. . . . .

It was the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who not only recognised the worth of stars, but also treated them with all the respect and was a very close friend of the legendary trio of Dilip Kumar, Dev Anand and Raj Kapoor, but he did not use them to campaign for him or the Congress Party.

The first actor to be nominated to the Rajya Sabha was Prithviraj Kapoor, but he could not make any impact as he said he was never given a chance to speak during entire term. This regret was later also made known by Nargis, Lata Mangeshkar and M. F Husain and many years later by Bharat Ratna Sachin Tendulkar.

The first time film celebrities took to politics seriously was in the South. The well-known writer of Tamil films, C. N Annadurai who was instrumental in forming the DMK party. He was followed by legendary stars like M. G Ramachandran and his disciple, the actress Jayalalitha and the DMK Party when it split had MGR as the founder of the AIDMK. The latest legends to join politics in Tamil Nadu are Rajnikanth and Kamal Haasan. In Andhra Pradesh star politics started with N. T Rama Rao who was and is followed by any number of stars and directors. There were star politicians in Kerala and Karnataka too but they couldn't make it on a national level. The one big star who could make a big splash in Indian politics was Dr Sivaji Ganesan who had a place of his own and was highly respected by Mrs Indira Gandhi.

The fever took time to catch in Hindi films. The first Prime Minister to take Hindi stars seriously was Rajiv Gandhi when he invited his childhood friend, Amitabh Bachchan, Sunil Dutt and Vyjayanthimala to contest elections to the Lok Sabha in 1984. All three won with thumping majorities with Amitabh not only winning from Allahabad but trouncing a major leader like H. N Bahuguna who lost his deposit and was so shocked that he died of a massive heart attack a few months later. Sunil Dutt gave a powerful leader like Ram Jethmalani a thrashing beating at the polls that he never thought of contesting elections again. That Amitabh quit politics just months after creating a storm in politics is a different matter.

It seemed like Atal Bihari Vajpayee had learnt a lesson from Rajiv Gandhi when he invited major stars like Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Vinod Khanna and Shatrughan Sinha to join him when he formed the first BJP government. He even went to the extent of making Vinod Khanna and Shatrughan Sinha Union Ministers in his Cabinet in charge of vital portfolios. Hema Malini has been a star campaigner of the BJP for years and has been a Member.

DEV HAD PLANS TO MAKE THREE MORE FILMS BUT…

He was always in a hurry to finish one project and before he could finish one, he had three more ideas in his mind.

He could run up the staircase of his office in Khira Nagar in Santacruz when he was eighty two. He could cross wooden bridges without any fear while his stars and technicians struggled. He could climb hills in Mahabaleshwar which was his favourite resort and he had a permanent room in an old Parsi hotel called The Fredricks, which was named after him and was not given out to anyone else. He did the impossible when he went up twenty six storeys at the Express Towers to shoot just one scene with Aamir Khan playing cricket at the Brabourne Stadium when he was in his eighties. He was shooting for a film and was simultaneously writing his autobiography, "Romancing Life", which he wrote in his own handwriting and completed in less than two months.

He was facing financial problems during the last twelve years of his life, but he never gave up and said "Money will come to Dev because Dev has never cheated anyone and has put all that he has earned back into the films he has made and the most modern equipment he has bought for his studio"

His speed slowed down after his son Suneil struck a deal with a builder and Dev's dream studio, pent house which was his own office and his recording studio were all gone for a staggering sum of two hundred and eighty three crore and the legendary icon was pushed into a small apartment in a building called "Ridhi" where he sat every afternoon and kept looking very sad and lost.

The builder had promised him two entire floors in the building that was to come up where his bungalow -cum-office was, but the builder took his own time to complete the structure and the more the time the builder took, the more frustrated Dev got, till he gave up hope.

He was still full of ideas and wanted to make three films of which he had already written the scripts. The first was to be a film based on the

assassination of King Mahendra of Nepal and his family (The King was a personal friend and had visited Dev in his office a week before the assassination and was the guiding force for Dev to shoot his film, "Hare Rama, Hare Krishna " all over Nepal)

The other film he had written the script for was based on the life and love of the world renowned sitarist, Pandit Ravi Shankar. And he was also planning to make a war film revolving round the life of Field Marshal Sam Maneckshaw.

But, his life took a bitter turn after his studio was sold and he fell seriously sick for the first time in his life, but never let anyone know. Suneil flew him to London. The father and son checked into Dev's favourite hotel in London, The Dorchester.

The same night Dev asked Suneil for a glass of water and according to Suneil, when he bought the glass to his father, the legend had gone away with all his dreams unfulfilled.

The building is now ready and the builder has been kind enough to name it 42-Anand, which was Dev's address for four decades.

WHEN DEV ANAND PLUNGED INTO POLITICS

Had a time when the country is reeling under many number of protests staged in different parts of the country against the CAA, NRC and NPR, people of my generation would only be tempted to go back to the time when Mrs. Indira Gandhi had declared the Emergency. All basic rights were suspended. All major political leaders had who she felt were her opponents and against her rising son, Sanjay Gandhi, were thrown into prisons or placed under house arrest and every voice that was raised was silenced in the most ruthless manner. There was a gag on the entire media and there were very few who could protest, like Ramnath Goenka, founder of The Indian Express, who had to go through severe hardships because of his unbending stand against her and her son and all her cronies. The country was literally living in and breathing fear.

Like there are asking now about why the top stars of the film industry are silent and are more interested in their safety zones than in sticking their heads out, there were questions asked about the leading stars of those dark times. But fear had gripped them all.

It was in this kind of her scary atmosphere that Dev Anand, the eternal romantic, turned out to be a real rabble and raised his voice in revolt against Mrs. Gandhi and her dictatorial regime. He together with his fierier the elder brother, Vijay Anand addressed a public meeting at Juhu Chowpatty and openly challenged Mrs. Gandhi to harass them. They also attacked the ruling dispensation for its hard-hitting rules which trampled on the basic human rights of all Indians.

Dev Anand was encouraged by the response he received and decided to form a political party and he did and called the party the National Party, which he announced before the press at a five star hotel. He received the support of film personality like V Shanaram, Shatrughan Sinha, G. P. Sippy and many others from every state, besides the thousands of people who attended the first public meeting. He addressed at the Shivaji Park in

Bombay which got front page coverage in every newspaper and literally shook up all the political parties and leaders in the country. He received several calls from some of the leading politicians asking him not to enter the dirty arena of politics as he was not cut out for it. Some even told him that politics was not for decent and educated people like him, but he continued and even formed a manifesto for his Party.

Lok Sabha from anywhere in India and they would support him. But Dev told them that he was interested in being a part of the cloud in Parliament and raise his hand and be counted as a number. He said he would go to Parliament only if he was assured that his voice would be heard. He did not like offending anyone but indirect ways walk out against all those film celebrities who got nominated or elected to Parliament and never said a word during their entire tenure.

During the last two decades of his life, he tried his best to keep away from politics, but his past always caught up with him in some way or the other. His films were often victimized by the censors, but he fought his way out. There were attempts made to get him involved in income tax raids but these attempts too failed. His friendship with politicians like V K Krishna Menon and Rajni Patel were also held against him at times, but nothing could be done to him.

The last time some forces of politics tried a rare kind of game with him. Amitabh Bachchan had just got into politics after winning the Lok Sabha seat from Allahabad and created some kind of history and Dev was still known as the face and voice of the opposition. In the meeting within two titans of two different generations was called at 7. 30 in the morning at the Sun-N-Sand hotel and since both were sticklers for time, the meeting which was attended by almost anyone who was any one in the media had packed the hall expecting fireworks.

I KNOW THAT HE IS DEAD BUT WHO WILL MAKE MY HEART UNDERSTAND ?

It was December 3 2011 and Goa was celebrating the birth anniversary of the patron saint of Goa St. Francis Xavier, when the news of the death of eternal Dev Anand caused a stir, not only in Goa and all over India but also in the different parts of the world, Dev Anand had a very close association with.

There was a long wait for the body of the man loved by millions for more than sixty years, but there seemed to be no hope that happening for reasons best known to his son Suneil and some of his friends from London and in London.

I still shudder to think of the ever so excited Dev lying as a corpse with a thorough post mortem conducted on his body, which was worshipped by so many. He had died in his suite at the Washington Mayfair Hotel in London.

His body was finally released and on the advise of Suneil it was decided to have a Christian mass said by a Vicar at the Putney Vale Crematorium, South London. The Hindu rites were also to be performed by a local Pandit. There were just a few mourners, a scene Dev Sahab, a man who loved solitude would have loved even in death. He would also certainly have liked the idea of the last rites being performed by a Vicar and a Pandit together.

Among those who were present at the last rites at the crematorium were members from the Indian High Commission, Lord Karan Bilimoria, Kartar Lalwani and Saharashri Subroto Roy who happened to in London at that time and Raja Kaasheff who remembered the many hours he has spent with the timeless man called Dev.

The cortege had finally reached the crematorium. Some obituary

references were made to Dev, who they could hardly do any justice to.

The coffin made in high quality wood was placed on the pedestal which took the coffin to a room where it was reduced to ashes by the electric crematorium and Dev Sahab had grown eternal again.

Dev towards the end of his life questioned the existence of God and heaven or hell. He said a man just gets born, works and passes away and there is no proof about what happens to a man after he is dead. He once said that he believes that there was a God within every human being and it would be better to believe in oneself than to believe in a God who nobody has seen and ideas like heaven and hell which also have no proof of such places being there.

He once even said that there was a possibility of something better than life happening to man after death. I hope this belief of Dev Sahab comes true for him if not for any one else. I firmly believe that a man like Dev and my Guru K. A. Abbas who once gave shelter to Dev and later even cast him in his film " Rahi ", can never die, they are always alive because their thoughts and beliefs are always endless and eternal.

--

USHA KE PYAARE DEV BHAI SAHAB

Usha or Ushi as Dev Anand called her was youngest sister of Chetan Anand, Dev Anand and Vijay Anand and was very dear to all the three brothers for whom she was very close and dear since she was the only sister.

She was a regular visitor at Dev Sahab's penthouse office in Pali Hill. But she was extra busy on Raksha Bandhan day as she had to shuffle between her brothers to celebrate the festival. . . .

The day began for her when she first visited the cottage of Chetan Anand built by the sea, where she had a proper punjabi breakfast with her 'Chetan bhaiya' and stayed on to have lunch on a huge table which stood facing the sea. Chetan's sons Ketan and Vivek joined them for a long lunch session and had a few glasses of bear before dipping into a great vegetarian lunch. Chetan always looked forward to celebrating Raksha Bandhan with his 'little sister' and once said, " How I wish Raksha Bandhan was celebrated more often. I consider it to be the most dignified Hindu festival. I remember how Vijaylaxmi Pandit, the only sister of Pandit Nehru tied a Rakhi around her brother and how the picture was splashed on the front pages of every newspaper of every language. I consider this festival to be the only dignified and meaningful festival where there is no noise, fireworks or colour. It is a festival which is confined to the family and the ceremony where the brother and sister pray for the long lives of each other and exchange gifts to be one of the most sacred festival, the only festival which has some genuine meaning. In my private mornings, I think that this festival should be one where countries should tie a bond of friendship and peace. It can serve a better purpose than all the meetings leaders have to bring about peace between countries and the world. "

Usha used to then go to her younger brother's house at 'Metropolitan' at Pali Hill to tie a Rakhi round her youngest brother Vijay Anand and have a tea meeting with her brother who she called Goldie, his wife Sushma and their son Vaibhav. And all the time she kept talking about reaching Dev Sahab's penthouse in time because she knew how particular she was about

time.

I was given the privilege to sit with Dev Sahab and Usha during three Raksha Bandhan days. And to this day I cannot forget how the brother and sister sat for hours and remembered the days of their youth and Usha kept saying, " I love all my brothers, but even if people call me partial, I must say that Dev bhaiya is the closest to me. He is both a brother and a father to me. I always knew that he would be a great man one day and I feel very happy and thank God for giving me such a loveable and caring brother like him. I have never seen a more sensitive human being like my Dev bhaiya. " Dev ordered dinner from a place called Candis and Dev Sahab would just pick up a piece of roti and dip it in dal and that was his dinner for celebrating a solemn day. I once asked Dev Sahab how he could survive on that piece of roti and dal and he said, " Eating is the one big passion among us Indians. We die to eat and not to live. It is not only a physical problem but a problem that can lead to a slow functioning of the mind and the entire body. That's why I only have a good breakfast and skip lunch and only have a good Indian dinner before I go to bed. I am being serious when I say that eating excessively and drinking as if their is not going to be a tomorrow is a sin against the body and the mind which we get as gifts only once. "

Dev Sahab was considered to be a very westernised kind of man and he even got his clothes from the best shops in the west and the best shoes. I never saw him wearing chappals, but he was what can be called a Indian at heart, a fact which was proved in the way he loved his food to be completely Indian and his favourite dinner used to be two rotis, a bowl of dal and some good vegetables moslty prepared by his one time heroine and wife Kalpana Kartik. He was not very keen about celebrating Diwali and was adverse to the festival of holi which he believed had been turned into 'a festival of hooligans who use the festival to show off wealth and their utter disrespect for the basic values of life'.

NAYE ZAMAANE MEIN BAHUT KUCH BADLAAV AAYA HOGA, LEKIN KYA AISE LOG AUR AISE SIDDHANT WAAPAS AAENGE? EK ZAMAANA THA JAB EK SAATH KITNI SAARI FILMEIN BANTI THI RAKSHA BANDHAN PAR, LEKIN AAJ KOI

AISE TYOHAARON KO MAAN NE SE JAISE INKAAR KARTA HO. AISE LAGTA HAI KI AAJ KA YUG PURAANE SIDHAANTON KO MAAN NE SE DOOR JA RAHE HAIN. LEKIN UNKO KYA MAALOOM KI INHI TYOHAARON SE AUR SIDDHANTON KE WAJAH SE HINDUSTAN WOH HAI JO AAJ HAI.

A DAY WITH DEV IN CHENNAI

I don't remember any occasion when Dev Anand had said no to any of my requests. The only time he did, he said he was very sorry and gave me an explanation which I don't think I deserved. He in his own style said, “Ali, I am still a star and as long as I am considered a star, I have to look presentable or it would mean the end of Dev. I am not looking good today and not even feeling good. I am not meeting anyone, except you who know everything about Dev".

We had an awards function in Chennai where we were going to present awards to the best in the four languages from the South. The owner of Indian Express, Vivek Goenka wanted Dev Saahab to be the chief guest “some how, any how". As usual, I was given the responsibility of making the request to him and when I did, he only said, “if you say, Dev will go with you, the only request I have is that you should be put up in the same hotel in a suite next to mine". I was not sure whether my miserly company would give me the privilege of living in the same hotel as Dev, but I didn't say anything to him.

He had reached the Airport a full one hour before departure and I felt embarrassed to see him waiting for me. He had covered his face with his famous cap during the flight (he always had a seat in the front row on any airline). We reached Chennai and there were people in high places from my company waiting to welcome him. He literally ran towards the car kept for him and before anyone from my management could say anything, he held me by my arm and leg me into the Mercedes kept only for him and the men from the management gave me angry looks, but I didn't have to worry as long as I had Dev Sahab with me and this was an unwritten rule wherever we travelled in India and I think I must have not travelled with anyone else as I had with him. He wanted me to go with him to every place and even wanted me to go abroad, I couldn't because I didn't have a passport which I was not interested in having after a nasty showdown with the passport officer in Mumbai who had problems with my name.

We were put up at the Taj Coromandel and he had already told my

people that he wanted me next to him and that is how it was.

Hardly had he settled down that the phone kept ringing. The news about landing in Chennai and living at the Taj had spread all over. He had asked me to take all calls and take decisions for him. Strangely, Kamal Haasan was the first to call and Dev asked him to come over as soon as possible. Kamal arrived within minutes and they had a long talk during which Dev had an idea of making a film with Kamal and Kamal had no other way but to say, "of course, we must Mr Anand". (Kamal was the first man I heard calling Dev" Mr Anand".

They were still talking when Rajnikanth who I knew for quite some time called and said he was already on the way. He reached the hotel just when Kamal was leaving and they both had large smiles on their faces. That's what Dev Sahab did to the best and most powerful rich people.

Rajnikanth touched Dev Saahab's feet and sat on the ground and kept sitting all the time he was talking to Dev Sahab. He spoke on the kind of English only he knew at that time (he speaks fluent English now). I don't know what they exactly spoke about but when Rajnikanth came out, he had tears in his eyes and he kept saying "thank you" to me, the Mr Nobody in the company of greats. The awards function was to be held the same evening. There was a massive crowd, but the crowd was not so enthusiastic about Dev Sahab, Dev gave him a rousing reception, but that was how they reacted to all the stars and superstars from Mumbai. But suddenly there was a commotion in the the crowd. Their "Thailava"(the living legend) had reached the ground without any invitation. He was dressed in his usual jeans, a t-shirt and rubber chappals. He ran up to the stage and again fell at the feet of Dev Sahab and the crowd went crazy. Dev couldn't believe how their "God" could fall at the feet of a star from Mumbai till Rajnikanth gave them the kind of introduction to Dev Sahab and called him" the Dev of Indian cinema" and said he was not even a speck of sand before Dev Sahab and the audience was silent and most of them had tears running down their cheeks.

Earlier that day, Khushboo who was a leading star and was once a child artist in Hindi films had the gumption to send her brother to take Dev

Sahab to visit the temple that was built by her fans in her honour. I had never seen Dev Sahab looking and behaving the way he did when he said, “I don't bow before God, how do you or your sister think of calling me to see your temple which will be here today and gone tomorrow"? The brother had to leave because he too realised what many others had, no one could make Dev Sahab say yes once he had said no.

Dev Sahab was very excited when his old friend and the greatest legend of Tamil Cinema those days and for all time, Dr Sivaji Ganesan invited him to his house for lunch. Dev Sahab and me reached his house which was life one big village which had more than sixty people living under one roof. The legend kept on calling Dev Sahab “my eng (he meant young) man "and Dev Sahab kept feeling very odd and they remembered the good old times and Sivaji inquired about the health of Yusuf (Dilip Kumar) and Raj ji (Raj Kapoor)". I felt very odd when Sivaji's wife served lunch for her husband and Dev while the entire family gathered around the table. Dev Sahab only picked up a piece of carrot and started nibbling at it while Sivaji wiped away a full plate of rice and curd and said, “now I know the secret of your being a eng man". It was the longest meeting Dev Sahab had in Chennai.

The next morning, we had to leave for Mumbai and he was ready and didn't know what to do with time. He asked me, “Ali, yeh masala dosa kaise hota hai? And he walked to the restaurant of the hotel and ordered a masala dosa. Looking at him starring at a large masala dosa placed before him attracted a huge crowd around him. He had a bite at only the dosa part of the masala dosa and said, “yeh log itna saara khaana kaise khaate hai? Itna toh maine ek mahine khaa sakta hoon" and he left the masala dosa untouched.

It was time to rush to the airport. We were late because of the fuss made over him by my management. When we reached the airport, there was an announcement which said, “this is the last and final call for Mr Dev Anand and Mr Ali Peter John" Dev Saahab carried my bag and the bag of a woman who was also late and started running towards the entrance for checkup. The woman fell on the ground. I kept struggling to keep pace with him, but couldn't. On the flight he said, “Ali, always respect time because the day time stops respecting you, you, me or even the Pope will be nowhere".

It was one of the many lessons I had learnt from the man who I always consider as Dev's (God) best gift to me, a father more than the best of fathers among any fathers in the world.

"DUM MAARO DUM" WAS ALMOST NOT GOING TO BE A PART OF DEV ANAND'S "HARE RAMA HARE KRISHNA"

Dev Anand was always in a state of excitement whenever he was making a film under his own banner, Navketan, even when he was making some of his last films, which didn't do well. But, he was most excited when he was making "Hare Rama Hare Krishna ". He had got special permission to shoot the film anywhere in Nepal by King Mahendra. The only hitch he had was when it came to the song "Dum maaro dum". It went very well with the theme of the film which was the growing cult of drugs among the youth.

The song was written by Anand Bakshi and tuned by R. D. Burman. But R. D's father and other advisors of Dev Anand didn't want the song to be a part of the film. But Dev Anand stood by R. D. Burman and got it sung by Asha Bhosle on the recommendation of. R. D. The song was picturised on Zeenat Aman in the midst of several hippie in Kathmandu.

The censors had problems with the song, but Dev was not the kind who would give up. The film was released with the song intact. It took only the first show to make it a craze and a cult song and is popular even today after almost fifty years.

The song which was not going to be a part of the film, changed the lives of so many. It made the film one of the biggest hits. It gave a new life to Dev's banner and himself. It made Zeenat Aman a cult heroine. It made R. D. Burman one of the leading music directors and if it made the biggest difference to anyone, it was Asha Bhosle who is thankful to Dev Anand and R. D. to this day, because like she says, she never had to look back after singing "Dum maaro dum"

AN APPLE A DAY -WAS IT THE SECRET BEHIND DEV ANAND'S YOUTH ?

I always found it very old to see a large bottle I think it is called a bharni in Hindi and Marathi placed on a tall stool filled with dry grams sukha chanaa in Dev Anand posh Pent house office on Pali hill and an apple or two in his huge fridge. It was only after spending a whole day with him that I realized and he told me that he only had one full meal in a way and that was night, for the rest of the day, he either bit into an apple or pooped some chanaas into his mouth. It was very rarely left he ordered for some sandwiches from the near by Candies Restaurant and merely nibbled at them and save, bahot achchhe hai, bahot achchhe hai tum khaakar dekho". I was at the shooting of one of films in Chandiwali Studios. It was lunch break and he called out to me and said, "Ali, you are having lunch with me". I took him seriously and saw him biting into an apple and then handing one over to me saying, here's your lunch. I had to have the apple till I was with him in the hope of joining the others for the tandoori chicken they were all savouring, even the junior most for spot boys and the assistant of the cinematographer, but why the time I reached the place where they were having a feast for lunch, the tandoori chicken was over and I too do with the last scraps of rice and dal was left. It was a price I had to pay for being close to Dev Sahab and I knew I could do anything for him.

But on that evening he was in a very different mood and said, come on, Ali, let's go to the revolving restaurant of the Sea Rock, I heard it is good and even if we don't get anything good, he can have a very good view of sunset". He got into the driver's seat and asked me to join him. I had rarely seen him driving his own car, but from that evening I saw him driving even after Poona and Mahabaleshwar without any hassles.

He ordered for cheese sandwiches and I could see all eyes focused on him and I remembered the morning at the Taj Coromandel in Chennai. He

said, "let's have some breakfast. I have never tasted a masaala dosa, lets order it". The masala dosa came he struggled to try and eat with a fork and a spoon. I had the temerity to tell him that it would be better if he tried to eat it with his hands and before he could try, there was a huge crowd watching to see how Dev Anand ate a masala dosa. I think he had lost his only chance of having a masala dosa which the Taj had got prepared for him.

I had been to every party he hosted mostly at his favourite Taj and sometimes at the Sun N Sand where he had his permanent suite for more than twenty years, but I had never seen him eat. We (my company) had a party at the then Oberoi (now Trident) and it took me three days of persuasion to come to the party. He kept his word and was among the first to arrive. I had in my own mischievous way decided to make him eat that night, but I also had to get him slightly drunk. I had heard that he did not have more than peg of whisky at any party and that time when he was forced to take a glass, he tried to find a place near a huge flower pot and quietly poured the drink into the flower. I don't have to boast about this especially because it is about Dev, the man who I considered was like a Dev on earth, but that night I made Dev Sahab have five drink and two tandoori rotis and some chicken curry. I felt I would get a firing from him the next way, but he was the Dev or always knew. He walked up to the door of Pent House and embraced me and said, "mazza aaya Ali teri party mein, aisa toh main kabhi zindagi mein whisky nahi pee aur itna khaana bhi maine kabhi khaaya nahi tha, paanch pack aur do tandoori roti itna toh main ek mahine mein khaata hu.

Life was the same again and I decided that I would not play any mischievous with Dev Sahab and when I told him that, he said, " aise kabhi nahi karna, Ali nahi toh tum Ali nahi rahoge. You have an identify and a place of your own which you have made lesson, please don't change and for God's sake please don't change because of what people they say.

He was invited to inaugurate a sports event in Pune by Mr. Madhav Rao by a very rich and powerful competition who has now been slept away into oblivion. The inauguration however got cancelled because Mother Teresa and Princes Diana had their funerals the same way. The rich politician

worked all his winning days to make Dev Sahab stay in his palace like house overnight and attend the function the next evening. Dev Sahab would not have any of it. The politician served out some delicious snacks an the crockery on the table was all in silver and gold. Dev Sahab had one look at the way the politician was trying to show of, gut up from his chair and asked me to follow him. He gut into his car and pulled me close to him and said, "ab him yahaan ek minute nhi nahi rahenge chalo Ali". The politician and all his mein tried running after the car, but they didn't know the Ziddi Ziddi was the name of his very second film, he did for Bombay Talkies Dev An and, he had never kowtowed to kings and queens. . . How could he kowtowed before a petty but filthy rich politician for which breed he always had a low opinion, except for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and V. K Krishna Menon, the first Defence Minister of India.

The King of Nepal, Raja Mahendra was on an official trip of Mumbai and made it a point to have tea with Dev Sahab at his Pent House. There was security right from Bandra Station to Dev Sahab Pent House. I still don't have any idea why Dev Sahab called me to join them for the meeting. He made me sit with the King and his queen and some of the best Nepalese snacks were on the table within minutes. Raja Mahendra who had given Dev Sahab permission to shoot anywhere in Nepal for his film Hare Raama Hare Krishna" was delighted to see the snacks and asked Dev Sahab to start eating. Dev Sahab picked up a piece of cake and said cheers" and when the King was busy talking to some of his colleagues about Dev Sahab, he saw his chance to keep the piece of cake back in the tray where he felt he belonged. The King invited Dev Sahab visit Nepal again feed with the best lunch in Nepal. Dev Sahab accepted his invitation. But a few days later, the King and Queen and his entire family were massacred by one of their own family members. . .

It is not that Dev Sahab had an aversion for food. He relished saw full dinner at around 11 pm, then bread all the papers he hasn't, watched the BBC channel and went to bed around 1. 30. He followed the same routine while he was in London in what was to be his last truth. He had been winner, watched television and went to bed never to wake up again. . . And life has the been the same again for me.

THE STORIES BEHIND THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

During the last 10 years of his life, Dev Anand had any number of writers from India and abroad who were willing to write the biography about his life and career but Dev was not willing to give anyone the authority to write the ultimate book about him. He often asked me, 'Who can write a book about Dev, except them?

One morning, he called me and asked me to come to his office as he wanted to give me a surprise. He showed me a pile of large size notebooks and a number of felt pens of different colours. He said we wanted me to be the first to know that he was about to start writing his autobiography and he just took one of the notebooks and started writing and then there was no stopping him for the next three months. He filled all those notebooks in his own handwriting which was all in capital letters.

He kept me in touch with the number of paragraphs and pages he had written and even gave me the privilege of reading most of the captures he had written and there was no way I could stop reading, because he was telling one of the most exciting and interesting stories about a man whose career spanned six decades and more.

He has finished writing the book in three months and 20 days, which I think is the shortest time any writer has taken to write a book which ran into a thousand pages.

He didn't have to look for publishers because every reading publisher in the country was ever willing to publish a book written by him about his life.

The winner turned out to be big Harper & Collins. They took some time to realise the book and when he edited version came to Dev, he was disappointed, but Harper& Collins told him that they would publish the book in two parts. The title of the book was to be 'Romancing with life ' Dev's own tittle.

Dev told me he had come out with the truth about everything in his life

and all about his work and the people he had worked with but the only thing he had avoided was writing about the women in his life as he said he didn't want to harm anyone at this stage of his life.

It was time to decide the date of the release of the book. He asked me if Amitabh Bachchan would release his book. I asked him if he was joking. He said he wasn't. I told him to dial Amitabh's number and before he could take a decision I dialled Amitabh's number and gave the mobile to him. It took him only 2 mins to make Amitabh agree to his request and I was surprised to see the excitement on his face.

The book was released by Amitabh at The Leela hotel and among the guests were some of Dev's favourite actors like Waheeda Rahman, Hema Malini, Raakhee and Tabu. Hema and Raakhee had great love and respect for Dev and performed poojas on his birthday and on the release of any of his films.

It was now time to release the book in Delhi. He again consulted me and I asked him why he couldn't try for the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. He said he didn't have much of a relationship with him. I asked him to try his number and tell him about his book. The Prime Minister was only too happy, but he said that the day Dev wanted to release his book (September 26) was also his birthday and he requested Dev to have the launch of his book at his residence and what a launch it was!

I wonder what happened to all those pages the publishers left unused. I wonder what happened to all there promises of bring out a sequel to the book. I also wonder about what kind of a deal his son had struck with the builders who had bought this bungalow, 'Anand' on Pali Hill with the promise of giving him two entire floors in the new building that was to come up. I wonder what has happened to all the most modern sound equipment Dev had purchased just a few years ago to make his studio the best in Asia. I wonder what has happened to the vast treasure of books Dev had in his library in his pent house.

And now I also wonder and worry about what may happen to his once idyllic bungalow, Iris park in juhu. How long will I go on wondering about a man who was one of the greatest wonders in my life?

DEV BELIEVED DEATH COULD BE MUCH MORE EXCITING THAN LIFE.

Dev was never petrified of death. True, he was not very happy about the idea of life coming to an end but he wanted people to believe that death could be the beginning of a new life which could be much more exciting, enlightening and beautiful than life. He pleaded with the living not to be scared or worried about that, because he firmly believed that there would be a beautiful beginning of a new life which would begin after the end of life. It was difficult for many to believe in this theory of death believed in by Dev, but no one could change Dev's theory about death till the very end of his life and he even died just the way he want to die - like a bubble sweeping into the little river without creating any sound or even a ripple.

THE FREE, FRANK AND FEARLESS DEV

I have warned you, all my very dear readers that I can not stop remembering an unbelievable man like Dev Anand and I have a very strong feeling that I will keep writing about him till I am drunk dead with an overdose of my admiration, love, total dedication and devotion for this man who was more than any man, I know, Dev Anand, the man of the Dev(God)above who will be with me till the time when I say or call out who "Dev "for the last time. . …

It was one of my umpteen meetings with Dev Sahab in his Pent House on one of those afternoons when we often met. Two men who look like politicians came up to the Pent House(Dev Sahab had always instructed his security guards not to stop anyone from meeting him). The two men spoke as if they were ordering Dev Sahab and one of them said, "Vilasrao Deshmukh bagal ke Girnar building mein aaye huwaye hai, apko bulaya hai ".

Dev Sahab leaped up from his chair, lost his temper and screamed "kon Deshmukh kaisa Deshmukh woh kon hai jo mujhe bulayega aur aise hi main darr se unke pass bhaagkar chale jaaoon. Woh jo bhi Deshmukh ho unse kaho jaakar ki woh mere sath aakar ek chai ka payaala pee le main kisi ke yahaa yuhi chale jaane waala Dev nahi hoon". The two men were stunned into silence and literally ran down the stairs. Let me tell you that Vilasrao Deshmukh was the powerful Chief-Minister of Maharashtra who had some of the most popular and successful stars and superstars waiting to do anything for him.

He was also the father of Ritesh Deshmukh who later became a small time star. That evening I ask Dev Sahab if he was not scared about the reaction of the CM to how he had dismissed his request and Dev Sahab said, "Ali, I have not been trained to be scared of anyone, however powerful they may be. I believe to live in fear is no life at all.

It was another time during the month of September, a few days before

his birthday on September 26th. Some tough looking men worked into Dev Sahab's Pent House. The man who look like the leader of the group told Dev Sahab that he was from the Bheem Sena and was the Mayor of Poona and then as if like a command he said, "aapko haamare function mein chalna hoga" and before he could say another word, Dev Sahab flared up and blasted the group and said, "kaisi sena, Bheem Sena, yeh Sena, woh Sena, kitne Sena, desh mein ek hi Sena honi chahiye or woh hai desh ki Sena. Main bilkul nahi aaoongaa tumhaare Sena ke function mein ". They almost threatened Dev Sahab and when their threats didn't ruffle a hair on Dev Sahab's head, the leader offered Dev Sahab six acres of land in Poona. Dev Sahab kept quiet for a few seconds and then called his security guards and asked them to throw the man out. They kept saying, "hum dekh lenge aapko, aapne galat logo se panga liya hai". Dev Sahab walk up to the gate of Anand and came back only after the men from Poona had Vanished from the scene. I again asked him the same question about his not being scared and he smiled his best smile and said, "Ali, if I keep getting scared of anyone and everyone, I would not be able to function and build my empire "

The Shiv Sena in Bombay had called for a "Bombay Bandh" and Dev Sahab called me and asked me to come to his house and I walked up to Iris Park, his bungalow in Juhu. He was already sitting in his green Fiat car with him at the steering. He asked me to get into the car and said, "chalo Ali daftar chalte hai ". I feebly told him about the Bandh and he said, "these Bandhs can only lead to more damage " and he kept driving which was the first time I saw him driving his own car. There were young man who tried to stop his car and he bravely faced them and told them " jaao koi achha kam karo, yeh Bandh -Vandh se tumhaara koi faaydda hone wala nahi, tumhaare neta log tumhari josh ka faaydda utaa rahe hain unke faaydde ke liye. ab jaagoge aur kab samjhoge aap log ?"And he kept driving as the young men kept looking at his car in sheer shock as they had never had an experience like the one Dev Sahab gave them. The upcoming actor Anupam Kher had a skirmish with a journalist called Troy Rebeiro from the Stardust magazine and Dev Sahab had come out in support of the journalist and in the interest of the freedom of press. Anupam who was given one of his first important breaks by Dev Sahab managed to get some of his co-

stars to launch some kind of action against Dev Sahab. And the association of cinema artists decided to ban the Anand Recording Studios owned by Dev Sahab who was a little disturbed. He called me to his Pent House and asked me what he should do. I for whatever my opinion was worth asked Dev Sahab to face the members of the action committee of the association. The next morning he walked into the meeting of the committee called to question Dev Sahab. He gave the leaders of the action committee, specially Anupam and Mithun Chakraborty the kind of tongue-lashing which made them all shed tears and the ban was called off.

I can go on and on about the fearless Dev Anand, but I feel I must mention the incident on the 26th floor of the Express Towers. I had got Dev Sahab special permission from Mr. Ramnath Goenka, the founder of Indian Express group of Newspapers, who had never seen a film and knew no one in the film Industry, but admired and loved Dev Sahab. He was shooting a scene of a cricket match between the teams of Aamir Khan and Aditya Pancholi for his film "Awwal Number". I still get the jitters when I think and visualise the scene of Dev Sahab running all over the twenty six floor and perching one foot on the parapet while the entire team of technicians and me kept looking at him in disbelief and I had even shut my eyes in fear because one wrong move by Dev Sahab could have meant the end of Dev Sahab. This is one the most fearless acts of any human being I have seen.

I was with him in Mahabaleshwar where he was shooting with his discovery Jackie Shroff and six other newcomers and he was supposed to plan up a hill race ahead of all of them. He had decided to run without a double and slipped and fallen and there was panic in the unit but he refused to stop even though he was bleeding in both his knees and he continued running up the hill and Jackie who was forty years older than him kept looking at him and kept saying, " Kya baap re baap, apun yeh umar ka ho jaaega toh qabr mein latakta rahega. Yeh agar baap nahi hai toh kaun hai?". Dev was listening to Jackie and looked back and said, " Aisi baatein mat kiya karo, Apna kaam kiya karo aur aage badhte raho". And he bandaged his knee and kept running till he had reached the peak of the hill.

DID DEV WORK MIRACLES ?

I don't believe in miracles, but some of the happening I was witnessed to when I was with Dev, gave me the firm belief that Dev was a man who worked what people called miracles. …

I was sitting with him in his penthouse one afternoon when he had just come into his office and four men brought up an obese woman in his lift with the intention of bringing her into his presence. When I told Dev sahab about the incident, he looked very embarrassed and asked me if there was a way of avoiding the incident as he didn't like such embarrassing incidents in his own life, but before he could think any further, the men had carried the woman into his Pent house. The woman who was weighing some 500 kilos and was sweating profusely kept looking at Dev Sahab and shouting 'Dev Dev Dev'. The men started chanting some prayers and Dev looked visibly scared and said, " Ali, inko bolo yahaan se iss gareeb aurat ko le ke jaaye, main iske liye kuch nahi kar sakta. Main iske jaise ek laachaar insaan hoon, inko bolo yeh ishwar se dua maange sabh theek ho jaaega". But the woman started screaming louder and the men said she had complete faith that Dev could be the only one who could heal her. The men finally took away the woman who still kept screaming 'Dev Dev Dev'. Dev was so disturbed that evening that he who went home only after midnight left office at 7 pm and went back home and slept till 10 in the morning the next day and then forgot all about the happening.

Six months later the men came back with the woman and the woman fell at Dev's feet and said that her name was Vaishali. She was the same woman who had come to see him and knew that he could be the only man who could cure her. She told him that she was completely cured now and she got married and was expecting her first baby. Dev said it was not he who has done anything for her and that was only the Dev above who had worked miracles for her and the yield and smiling woman kept singing 'Dev Dev Dev'. I was in the house of one of Dev's PR men, Amardeep. It was lunch time and his seventy year old wife took him to her kitchen and opened an old cupboard and took out an old photograph of Dev and showed it to me and blushed and said, "I love this man for the last seventy

years and whenever I feel sick or depressed I just take his photographs and look at him and all my troubles fly away. I haven't moved Dev's photographs from my cupboard even one day or one moment in my life. I don't need any hospital or any doctor as long as I have Dev with me".

Every September 26, thousands of women from all over Maharashtra flocked outside Dev's office with folded hands praying to him to bless them because the believed that if he raised his hands on them with his blessings, they would be cured and so would all the members of their family who were in any kind of trouble. Dev tried his best to try to convince them that he was an ordinary human being like them but they refused to believe in him and today even after 10 years after he is dead, there are houses of people who have this very strange belief that if Dev may or even will come back to life one day. What can one say about a man who arouses such tremendous faith in his amazing followers?

WE YOUNGSTERS SHOULD DO SOMETHING TOGETHER, RISHI

Dev was always the spirit of bubbling youth and endless energy and a power who could drive away the most depressing forces from people from different walks of life. He could be as fresh in the morning when he started work and could be the same man at midnight when the world around him was tired and looking for ways of hitting the bed. It was at this time that his mind worked most feverishly.

He was shooting in Coorg for his film 'Anand aur Anand' in which he was introducing his son Suneil. There were some young actors like Asrani, Paintai and others who were trained at the FTII who wanted to know how Dev just dressed up in his bedroom. They planned to keep awake all night and knock at his suite at 3. 30 in the morning. They reached his suite which was next to mine and looked both excited and scared. They knocked at Dev's door and were shocked to see him all dressed up and working at his table and when he saw them, he called them to have breakfast with him, but they ran for their lives and Asrani spoke for them when she said, " yeh toh hum sab ka baap hai. Hum inke saath kya competition karenge?"

There was noted film magazine called Star and Style. The editor was a friend of Dev and knew how sprightly he was at any time of the day. She had made it and unwritten rule to send any reporter, especially if she was a female reporter and was depressed and was feeling low to Dev to spend some time with him on the excuse of doing an interview with him. At the end of the interview, the reporter came back full of life and filled with the energy and enthusiasm of Dev.

Rishi Kapoor was an admirer of his father Raj Kapoor as a filmmaker, but he was a great admirer of Dev and found time to meet him at his Pent House. Rishi was taken aback and even amused when during one of their meetings, Dev put his arms around Rishi and said, " Chintu, we youngsters should get together and do something to change the face of Hindi Cinema". It was an event for Chintu who never forgot the meeting

ever. He even did a guest appearance in one of his last films and did not charge him any price and whenever Dev wanted to shoot at RK Studios, all the Kapoor brothers used to stand around in the compound waiting to be of help. Rishi's favorite line used to be, "After all, he is our father's best friend and it is our duty to be of help to him. What else can we do for a legend like him? "

AN END WHICH CANNOT BE AN END

You cannot forget Dev, so what he is gone away? The mortal body of the immortal Dev Anand left ten years ago. He was a free spirit and like a true spirit he died just as he wanted in his hotel room in his favourite city London. He wanted to go like a bubble floating down a river and that is how he went. His mortal remains were treasured in a cemetery in London, while millions of his devotees waited at the Mehboob Studios to bid him farewell, but they didn't know that a Dev never had the reason to be sent away because he was always here, with us, with them, with the whole world. His office in Khira Nagar is now a commercial complex. His office at ' Anand ' is a twenty storeyed residential complex on Pali Hill where his son, Sunil has his plush office on the nineteenth floor, a floor on which Dev was supposed to have his own office and his recording studio. All that remains of the era of Dev Anand is a blackboard of golden letters, 'Anand'. And in a silent corner of the busy as busy suburb of Juhu stands his bungalow Iris park which looks as if it is waiting for him to return home. And in every corner of the world live millions of memories of a man who was born eternal and can never die like normal mortals die.

JAANA NA DIL SE DOOR, DEV SAHAB

(UNKE NINETY EIGHTH JANAM DIN KE AVSAR PAR)

I believe there is some power greater than the God we have today which takes major decisions for us. I believe that it is this other God that brings people together and makes them form different kinds of relationships and associations. I will give you the outstanding example of the relationship between one of the greatest men I have ever known, Dev Anand, and me…

I was a die-hard fan of Dev Anand and never missed any of his films even at the cost of skipping my meals. It was Independence Day in 1972 and after attending a flag hoisting ceremony I decided to see Dev Anand's film, "Jab Pyaar Kisi Se Hota Hai". I had just bought my first bicycle out of the hundred and fifty rupees I had received as a prize for a writing competition. I placed it outside the compound of a Church where Independence Day was being celebrated. I came out with all the excitement to go on a long journey on my new bicycle, but I saw no bicycle anywhere. I tried to look all over, but my new bicycle had vanished. I made a hue and cry about my loss and people advised me to lodge a complaint at the Andheri Police Station. But I decided to go to the Sangam Theatre nearby where "Jab Pyaar Kisi Se Hota Hai" was being screened at what was called a matinee show. Dev Anand and all the beautiful songs in the film made me forget all about my bicycle. I later went to the Police Station and before I could open my mouth, the sub-inspector on duty hollered to a constable, "Aat Gya Yaala" (throw him behind bars) thinking that I was the thief who had come to surrender. I was pulled into what looked like a cage which had a large wooden plank on the floor with a very heavy baton lying near it. I was shocked and started speaking in English. The officer was very impressed with my English and he first fired all the constables on duty for treating me badly and then asked one of the constables to bring me out. He asked me to record my complaint after listening to me, but I just ran out of

the Police Station and never went back again. That day I only thought about Dev Anand and all his songs from "Jab Pyaar Kisi Se Hota Hai" which helped me to forget the loss of my bicycle which I had bought when I was living a hand to mouth existence…

Little did I then know that I would one day be so very close to the legendary Dev Anand, so close that he told everyone that I was like the son he would have always liked to have. I would love to go into a rapid flashback into some of the scenes I shared with Dev Anand who I called Dev Sahab like everyone else. . .

It was the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay. Dev Sahab was having one of his big parties at one of the special halls in the Hotel. There were hundreds of celebrities from all walks of life who had thronged the hall to wish Dev Sahab. I was introduced to him by my senior and I soon found myself lost in that illustrious crowd and was slowly trying to slink out when I heard a familiar voice calling out, "Ali, you are not going, come back". It was Dev Anand himself and how could I not follow his loving order? It was my first brush with the Dev Anand which was destined to grow into a bond that would last for all time…

The next time I met him was at his office in Khira Nagar in Santacruz. I had to climb a wooden staircase to reach his office. I couldn't climb those stairs and kept staring at them till Dev Sahab arrived in an ordinary green Fiat sitting in the front seat with his chauffeur. I saw him running up the staircase and suffered a major complex and then made brave to climb up and reach his cabin. The warmth with which he received me, the way he made enquires about me and my family and whether I was happy or not with my job made me feel absolutely comfortable and it was like two long lost friends who had given up hope of meeting finally meeting again. As I came down I realized that I had a new spring in my walk and running down the same staircase I was scared of. That was the feeling Dev Sahab gave me for the next thirty- five years of our relationship…

He then shifted to a bungalow on Pali Hill where he used to be a struggler trying to catch the attention of the rich and the famous and especially the stars several years ago. We had hundreds of meetings in the

Pent House he had built for himself which was the seat from where he ruled his empire. And believe it or not I was a new man every time I finished a meeting with him. He had some extraordinary energy and that joy of living which he could pass on to anyone who was lucky to meet him…

I was always overjoyed when the Dev Anand remembered my birthdays and came down to my old and small building with a big basket of flowers, a huge cake and a bottle of the best wine just to wish me. I have a collection of his notes written for every occasion in his own hand writing which I have treasured and they will be my priceless treasure till the end of my life…

I remember that afternoon when the phone on my table at home rang. I was in one of those typical Dev Anand kind of "Anandi" moods. I heard the voice on the other side and I don't know why or how I thought it was someone who was trying to play a prank on me. I started talking to the voice just like Dev Anand would and I kept talking till I suddenly realized that it was the Dev Anand himself talking to me. I was embarrassed and did not know how to continue the conversation, but he said, "nahin nahin, ruko mat Ali, tum meri nakal bahot achchi karte ho". I did not have to say sorry to the man who was a living legend because he did not give me a chance…

Dev Sahab made it a point to take me with him to all the outdoor shootings of his films and made sure that I was given a suite adjoining his. Once during the film festival in Goa he did something that will live with me forever. I couldn't fly with him, but he kept asking me to come to Goa. I reached Goa and the venue on a bike. He was very busy all day and I did not know how to get in touch with him. He found me and sent a car for me to take me to the Taj where he was staying with his son Suneil. There were no rooms in the hotel, but Dev Sahab wanted me to be with him in the same hotel. He asked his son Suneil to vacate the cottage he was staying in and moves into his suite and gave me the cottage to stay in. How could a man so great be so very considerate to an ordinary journalist like me?

He had King Mahendra of Nepal and Queen Aishwarya as his guests during their visit to Mumbai. He called me and said I should be at the Pent

House before three. I rushed to reach in time because he did not like anyone to be late. I was completely baffled when he set aside all protocol and asked me to sit on the sofa with the King and his Queen and himself. I have rarely felt so honoured…

He shared all his happy and painful moments with me. He once fell in the bathroom of his bungalow in Juhu and I still can't understand why he had to call me first even when he was in a painful state. He said, "Ali, I have fallen in the bathroom, the doctor is about to come and if he says I will not be able to work anymore, I will kill myself". I met him and he was his own cheerful self. No part of his body had been badly hurt and we both drove down to his office in another hour…

I was woken up at four in the morning by a call, I took it and it was my photographer who knew about my love for Dev Sahab and kept stammering before he could speak and finally said, "Ali Sahab, woh Dev Sahab ki death ho gayi". I smashed and broke everything that came into my hands and cried out aloud till I calmed down and called my photographer and gave him the number of Dev Sahab's bedroom and asked him to call and disconnect if he heard the voice of Dev Sahab. He did as I was told and when he called back I could almost see him grinning from ear to ear. Dev Sahab had been "killed" by such nasty rumours several times during his life time, but they did not affect him in any way…

I was privileged when he called me on the day he had started writing his autobiography, "Romancing with life". He looked thrilled as he kept looking at the pages he had written in his own handwriting. I kept prodding him to continue writing and he wrote with the kind of speed I still find difficult to believe. He completed the book in a month which is a record which must go into the Guinness Book of Records. The book which was released at the house of the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Delhi and by Amitabh Bachchan in Bombay and is one of the biggest bestsellers among autobiographies written by anyone from the film industry…

Talking about Amitabh Bachchan, I remember the evening Dev Sahab told me that he wanted Amitabh Bachchan to release the music of one of his films. He asked me if Amitabh would agree. I told him to just pick up

the phone and talk to Amitabh and after five minutes Dev Sahab was all smiles. "Maan gaya, maan gaya, Amitabh aayega, " he said in delight. But he said Amitabh had one condition. He would have to go to Amitabh's house which he had never seen before they could proceed to the hotel for the function. Dev Sahab was dressed in his typical corduroy jeans and a flowery shirt with a sweater round his neck. Amitabh asked Dev Sahab to excuse him for a few minutes and when he came back, he was dressed in the same kind of jeans and exactly the same kind of shirt with a sweater round his neck. Dev Sahab took a great liking for Amitabh and years later when he had to release his autobiography, it was Amitabh who was his first choice to release the book…

I travelled with him to places like Pune, Bhopal, Lucknow, Kalyan near Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi and wherever I went with him, I saw lakhs of people waiting to just catch a glimpse of him. Entire cities used to come out in the streets to welcome him…

I had once requested him to be the chief guest at an awards function in Chennai. He agreed. News about his being in Chennai spread and the first man to call him and invite him home was the great Dr. Sivaji Ganesan. It was a great meeting in the house of Sivaji Ganesan which was as big as a village. Dr. Ganesan kept calling Dev Sahab "young boy" and I was amused. There were at least fifty women of all ages who had specially come to have a look at Dev Sahab. When we reached the Taj there were calls from both Rajnikanth and Kamal Haasan who wanted to come to the hotel to pay their respects to Dev Sahab. I was happy to arrange their meetings with Dev Sahab. They both touched Dev Sahab's feet and sat in silence like stunned fans. It was Dev Sahab who kept telling them, "we young people should get together and make films". That afternoon Dev Sahab surprisingly ordered for a "masala dosa" which he had never tasted in his life. He had it in the lobby of the hotel and there were thousands of people to just watch Dev Sahab having a "masala dosa". That evening Rajinikanth asked me if he could come to the function where Dev Sahab was the chief guest. I laughed at his request. He came in his usual jeans and a T-shirt and with rubber sandals on his feet. There was a huge crowd who had not expected their "god" to be there, but once Rajinikanth arrived there was pandemonium all over with people shouting out the name of "Rajini" till

"Rajini" just raised his hand and there was complete silence instantly. He then ran up to Dev Sahab and touched his feet in public and told the audience that Dev Sahab was like God to him. The crowd grew mad and the applause did not stop till Dev Sahab and "Rajini" kept embracing each other. That was the magic of Dev Sahab who was a star among the greatest stars…

I was with him when he went to Delhi to receive the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. The whole of Delhi seemed to be in a festive mood just knowing that Dev Sahab was in Delhi. The Award function was attended by President Abdul Kalam and the then I & B Minister, Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad. The Minister said it was his most glorious moment when he signed the papers declaring Dev Sahab as the winner of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. Dev Sahab ran up to the dais and whistled out to the audience even as he took off his cap and waved out to them. He was again dressed up in his normal jeans and a shirt with a sweater round his neck. The President broke protocol and stood up for full ten minutes and clapped for Dev Sahab together with the entire audience…

How many more incidents must I narrate to remember the unforgettable Dev Sahab who can never die for me but always be the dynamic Dev Sahab he always was? The last time I saw him climbing a hill in Mahabaleshwar during the shooting of "Charge Sheet". He left Jackie Shroff and other young men far behind as he just kept climbing higher and higher; climbing hills was always something he loved even when he was a nobody in Poona…

He had his own diet which he followed strictly. He had a heavy breakfast in the morning and then did not even have a sip of water all day. Sometimes when he was very hungry, he ordered for some sandwiches from the nearby Candy's and some tea of which he had a few sips. He loved having what is called "channas" (dry grams). On locations, he mostly lived on just one apple during the entire day of hard work. He had just one drink at a party and held his glass as long as he was at the party and if anyone forced him to have another peg, he accepted and waited for a chance to pour it into a flower pot. I am not saying this to make any kind of impact, but I had the privilege of making him have five small drinks during

a party hosted by the paper I was working for. I also did something shocking during his daughter Devina's wedding. I was drunk and put my hands round Dev Sahab on one hand and Dilip Kumar on the other. The legends did not mind, but smaller people looked at me as if I had committed a crime…

He rarely was in a bad mood and hated crying, but the only times he really cried was when he remembered his mother and when his younger brother. Vijay Anand suddenly died. He had a strange dislike for morbid stories and death. He rarely attended funerals, except for the funerals of his elder brother, Chetan Anand, Raj Kapoor and Vijay Anand…

He was growing older in age but his ambitions were only growing more and more adventurous. But, life was not the same again for him when his bungalow which was his office and had the best recording studio in Asia was brought down to come up with a multi –storied building. He had to shift to a small flat where he openly showed how uncomfortable and unhappy he was and kept waiting for the builders to keep their promise to give him a Pent House in the new building…

During one of our last meetings, he had a fan visiting him who had come all the way from Australia. The way he introduced me to the man moved me to tears. He called me "my son, a sufi, a man who is not of this world but just on a visit with not very good experiences about the world he was trapped in. I always pray for him to find the love and happiness he has been looking for. "…

He had a press conference at the Sun-N- Sand Hotel where he once had a suite (339) and lived for more than twenty years. He asked me to come an hour early and it was not the same Dev Anand who was talking to me and when he embraced me, I could feel every bone in his body. He had grown very weak…

A few days later he left for London with Suneil. One night I received a call from someone who was close to him. It was the final call which said that the man who had played a great role on the stage of life had brought the curtains down on his life. Dev Anand who I frankly believed was

someone who would never die had died in his hotel room in London, dead for the world but always alive for me till my life comes to an end…

I as a "son" of Dev Anand have certain disturbing questions to ask about his death and all that happened after it. He was alone with his son. He felt uneasy and asked Suneil for a glass of water and before he could have a sip, the legend who never had any major health complaints was dead. His body was not brought to Mumbai where lakhs of people were waiting to say their last farewell to the man who had brought joy (anand) into the lives of millions. His casket was carried by his son and Subrata Ray of Sahara who is now in Jail and he was buried in some unknown place and only a token condolence meeting was held at the Mehboob Studios where people lined up to pay their homage to the eternal Dev Anand framed in a photograph. This was certainly not the kind of end for a man like Dev Sahab who has no end and will never have an end…

And then he left…And people felt he had left forever, but how wrong they were. He is still here, there and everywhere.

That house he lived in a chawl in Parel when he first came to Bombay is still there, but he is not there. That bungalow in Pali Hill where he met some of the greatest writers, actors and composers has vanished in to thin air. His office in Khira Nagar is a jungle of cement and concrete where his memories cry out in anguish for relief. That bungalow called Anand where he had his penthouse and his sound recording studio is a massive residential complex where his son Suneil has an entire flour for himself. Where he sits all alone and plays with his empty promises he had made to his father. His bungalow Iris Park in Juhu looks like a haunted church where his wife Mona (Kalpana Kartik, who is 90), lives with her only son Suneil who is 72.

And Thank God Dev's memories are so fresh and fragrant forever. And can never leave us now or forever.

NAME INDEX

A

Aamir Khan, 54, 76

Aarti Mishra, 4

Ajay Devgan, 29

Ali Peter John, 1, 2, 4, 65, 94, 96

Amit Khanna, 37

Amitabh Bachchan, 28, 34, 41, 53, 57, 72, 85

Anand Bakshi, 67

Anupam Kher, 75

Asha Bhosle, 17, 67

Ashok Kumar, 22, 51

Asrani, 79

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, 53

B

Bhagwan, 27

C

Chetan Anand, 22, 60, 88

D

Dadasaheb Phalke, 87

Dev Anand, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17-20, 23-25, 27-32, 34-37, 41, 44-46, 48-50, 52, 56, 58, 60, 63, 65, 67-69, 71, 74, 76, 81-84, 88, 89

Dharmendra, 28, 29, 53

Dilip Kumar, 12, 28, 35, 51, 52, 65, 88

Dimple Kapadia, 28, 29

Durga Khote, 12

G

G. P. Sippy, 56

Guru Dutt, 25

H

Hema Malini, 53, 72

Hemaa Singh, 4

I

Indira Gandhi, 53, 56

J

Jackie Shroff, 76, 87

Jawaharlal Nehru, 52, 70

Jeetendra, 28

K

Kamal Haasan, 53, 64, 86

Kapoor brothers, 80

King Mahendra, 55, 67, 84

Krishna Menon, 57, 70

L

Lata Mangeshkar, 17, 34, 53

Laxmikant-Pyarelal, 96

M

M. F. Husain, 94

Madhubala, 12

Madhuri Dixit, 29

Manoj Kumar, 28, 30

Mehboob, 13, 22, 35, 46, 52, 81, 89

Mithun Chakraborty, 76

Mother Teresa, 48, 49, 69

N

Nargis, 12, 53

Nutan, 22

P

Pandit Hridaynath, 34

Pandit Ravi Shankar, 55

Prithviraj Kapoor, 53

Q

Queen Aishwarya, 84

R

R. D. Burman, 67

Raakhee, 72

Raj Kapoor, 12, 22, 28, 35, 51, 52, 65, 79, 88

Rajendra Kumar, 52

Rajesh Khanna, 41

Rajshri, 39, 40

Ramnath Goenka, 40, 56, 76

Rishi Kapoor, 79

S

Sachin, 53

Sahir Ludhianvi, 17

Sanjay Gandhi, 56

Shankar Iyer, 4

Shatrughan Sinha, 53, 56

Sivaji Ganesan, 53, 65, 86

Sunil Dutt, 53

Surjit Singh, 4, 95, 96

T

Tabu, 72

Trinetra Bajpai, 20

V

Vijay Anand, 17, 22, 56, 60, 88

Vinod Khanna, 53

Z

Zeenat Aman, 67

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ali Peter John has had several problems with his name. He does not have a ration card, nor does he have a passport, all because of his odd-sounding name. He is an M. A. in English literature from the Bombay University, but he believes that he has learnt more in the University of Abbas than he has learnt at the university.

He was writing for India's prominent film magazine *Screen* for forty-eight long years and his column, *Ali's Notes*, has been accepted as a landmark by the film industry and readers who has been following him. He has written in almost all the newspapers and magazines of India on a variety of subjects about films. He has published twenty books during the last twenty years in his own way. The most prominent book according to him is his autobiography, Life-Bits and Pieces, which had its cover designed by the renowned painter M. F. Husain, the autobiography has also been translated in various languages. His circle of friends includes all the legends and down to .

He has been living his own simple life without expecting anything from life. He is now writing for a leading Hindi film magazine Mayapuri and at 71, he writes at least two articles every day. He hopes to write till he can no longer write.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE PUBLISHER

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11 Hindi Films: Pictures of the Cast (1933-1937), by Sheo Khetan and Prof Surjit Singh (2019)

12 Illustrated History of Punjabi Cinema (1935-1985), by Bhim Raj Garg (2019)

13 Unsung Junior Artists of Hindi Cinema Who Debuted Before 1961, by Upendra Samaranayake and Prof Surjit Singh (2019)

14 Beete Hue Din (Forgotten Memories of Hindi Cinema) by Shishir Krishna Sharma (2020, English, 2021, Hindi)

15 Hindi Films: Pictures of the Cast II (1938-1940), by Sheo Khetan and Prof Surjit Singh (2021)

16 Unsung Junior Artists of Hindi Cinema Who Debuted After 1959, by Upendra Samaranayake and Prof Surjit Singh (2021)

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18 Censor Certificate Information of Hindi Talkies (1931-2010), by Har Mandir Singh 'Hamraaz' and Prof Surjit Singh (2021)

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21 Rainbow of Emotions, by Lalit Berry (2021)

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